

FBI watches ousted governor's office

United Press International
ASHVILLE, Tenn. — FBI agents clamped tight security on Tennessee's Capitol Thursday to prevent ousted Gov. Ray Blanton or staff from removing any papers pertaining to a grand jury investigation of a pardon-selling scandal.

Republican Gov.-elect Lamar Alexander, who was to have taken office Saturday, was sworn in Wednesday night, three days early. He accused Blanton, who stunned the state Monday night by commuting sentences of 52 convicts.

Alexander busied himself Thursday completing selection of his cabinet and preparing for his formal inauguration, which will still be Saturday.

Alexander hurriedly took the oath of office after U.S. Attorney Hal DeLoach advised legislative leaders that Blanton planned further action for prisoners involved in the grand jury probe.

FBI agents were stationed inside the offices of Blanton's staff to prevent the removal of any evidence relating to a federal investigation into charges that Tennessee prison inmates have been able to buy their way out of prison. Three Blanton aides have been arrested in the investigation. Blanton himself is a fugitive. Blanton press aide Jim Gilchrist

arrived at his office in the Capitol to find his desk cleaned out and his belongings packed in boxes.

"The FBI told me they wanted to check the contents before I leave," Gilchrist said. "I told them all I had

was a can of shoe polish, a few Playboys and some pictures of my kids. It makes you feel a little strange."

Blanton's legal counsel, his administrative assistant and at least two of his close friends were among the others subpoenaed to appear.

Blanton, a 48-year-old Democrat, did not learn of his ouster until five minutes before Alexander was sworn in at a hastily arranged ceremony in the State Supreme Court building.

Texas Solons try to void ERA vote

United Press International
AUSTIN — Texas would become the fifth state to rescind ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment under resolutions introduced by Sen. Walter Mendgen, R-Houston, and Rep. Clay Smothers, D-Dallas, in their respective chambers.

The resolutions, introduced Wednesday, would specifically rescind the concurrent resolution the Legislature passed in March 1972 ratifying the ERA.

A total of 35 states have ratified the ERA with 38 ratifications needed for its adoption. Four states — Nebraska, Tennessee, Idaho and Kentucky — have rescinded ratification. The seven-year deadline for ratification will expire on March 22, but Congress has extended the deadline an extra nine months.

"If enough states rescind ratification to prevent 38 states from agreeing, the proposed amendment does not enjoy a consensus of three-fourths of the states and is therefore not valid," he said.

Smothers said if proponents are given additional time to have ERA adopted, then states that have passed the amendment have the right to rescind.

"Congress has attempted to try to change the rules in the middle of the game to give extra innings to the team that is behind, while prohibiting the other team from being able to score during the extra innings," he said.

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Restricted pardoning in Texas

United Press International
AUSTIN — In 1936, Texas amended its constitution to give the governor the power to pardon or parole any convicted criminal. The amendment was intended to give the governor the power to reduce or rescind prison sentences.

But Texas governor now is barred from granting pardons or paroles except on the written recommendation of an independent Board of Pardons and Paroles. The chief executive is not required to grant a pardon or parole recommended by the board, but may not do so without its recommendation.

For a long time Texas placed complete pardoning power in the hands of her governor. Although governors used pardons distastefully, some governors granted pardons indiscriminately, according to a handbook prepared by the Texas State Archives.

Between 1915 and 1917 Gov. James E. Ferguson granted 1,774 pardons and 479 conditional pardons before he was impeached and removed from office by the Legislature for misuse of state funds.

Ferguson's successor, Gov. James P. Hobby, granted 1,319 pardons and 199 conditional pardons between 1925 and 1926. This led to a demand to curb the governor's pardoning power, the handbook explains.

The handbook explains that the governor may grant one pardon or parole to an inmate facing a sentence without action by the Pardons and Paroles Board, but only after a recommendation from the agency for other clemency acts.

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