State



Texas launches last effort for licensing of superport

United Press International HOUSTON — The Texas Deepwater Port Authority gave final approval Wednesday to the latest hope for a Texas offshore superport — an appeal for federal licens-ing to build a smaller port than originally planned. Chairman Bob Casey said TDPA is dead unless Trans-portation Secretary Neil Goldschmidt quickly approves a smaller terminal or extends the Saturday deadline for TDPA to accept the federal license for the larger ter-minal

minal "We're out of money and I'm not going back to the

Legislature again," Casey said. The board, which has operated on temporary state funding, authorized Casey to fly to Washington to try to convince Goldschmidt today to approve a license amendment without full-scale hearing

amendment without full-scale hearings. "I'm gonna do the best sales job I can," the former congressman said. "We think it's needed down here." Goldschmidt's staff already has received TDPA's plan to start with a 500,000-barrel-a-day oil unloading buoy 11 miles off Freeport rather than trying to build the entire 2.5 million-barrel-a-day facility planned 26 miles off-here offshore.

The small terminal, billed as a first stage to be ex-The small terminal, blied as a first stage to be ex-panded later, would depend on supertankers' pumps to force their oil through a 52-inch undersea pipeline to onshore storage-distribution facilities. Casey said bond experts have told TDPA it can sell general revenue bonds — not backed by state money or oil company was commitments — to finance the \$425

oil company use commitments - to finance the \$425 million first stage cost.

The original plan required oil companies to back the bonds by promising to use the project, but TDPA offi-cials said because of changing world and political condi-

tions they could not obtain enough commitments. TDPA's concern is that some members of Gold-schmidt's staff may want a complete new license pro-ceeding with new environmental and economic impact investigations.

Casey said new license hearings would be time than TDPA has. It has spent \$830.00 \$900,000 the Legislature gave it, closed its S900,000 the Legislature gave it, closed is de Houston and cut its paid staff to one secretar, The Department of Transportation offered the al license in 1979, setting a May 15, 1980, deal TDPA to accept it. DOT has extended that deal Saturday

Casey said bonds could be sold in January, on tion could start in June and the terminal could ing supertankers too large for onshore ports bythe 1983

He said that if business develops as expected could later build up to the larger facility by at the buoy-to-shore undersea pipeline and movin er out to sea.

Many environmentalists support the superport risky to the environment than the entry of tank onshore ports or the current ship-to-ship, hig transfer of 2 million barrels daily in waters near Critics suggest declining oil imports make expensive project unnecessary.

"You say it's gonna continue to decline, butin reach a point where it's not gonna decline," Cas 'I don't know (where that point is). I just knoww self-sufficient.

A similar facility is more than half finished w Grand Isle, La., and Casey has warned that wi similar facility Texas stands to lose oil-dependent try to Louisiana.

The Texas project has been near death for m TPDA was created by the Texas Legislature take over an effort begun in the early 1970s b

abandoned by a private consortium called sead If TDPA fails, Texas might eventually have port through other private efforts, but Case does not want to wait. Louisiana already claim lion in added investment from its project, hes

Gas use may be threatened

United Press International HOUSTON — A spokesman for gas distributors warned utility reg-ulators Wednesday that declining gas company profit rates threaten America's ability to use one of its fuels

"The money supply essential to bring more gas to the nation's burner tips is the real key to the future flow of gas," American Gas Association Chairman Robert H. Willis told the 92nd Annual Convention of the National Association of Regulatory Util-ity Commissioners (NARUC). "It is today an undermining force that, without attention, can break off and inhibit the release of new gas sup-

Willis said gas producers are profiting from gradual federal deregulation, but gas distributors who must market that gas are not in the same situation

He told the regulators that his personal survey showed the average gas company profit rate is about 5 percent of revenues

Willis said the average gas utility currently returns an average gas utility percent on common stock, short of the 16 percent he said is necessary to attract investors.

He said continued low profits, low return on stock and inability to market bonds will force private companies to spend equity to postpone extinction

Willis said the gas industry to spend \$400 billion between and the year 2000 to deliver American consumers. He figure was "well over six times sent industry capital invest "Much of the cash must ber Aggi ville.

Ho

The r

NO

by distribution companies, consistently face large capital us will consistently face large capita for system support even exact the required new supply adv programs," Willis said. He said regulatory offician help educate the public that ties "put the last marble r already bulging sack" of real projects inflated learning hereits Weds mal hou o.m.; P Thur .m.-6 r prices inflated largely by soan **** ducer prices.

