

State / National

Democrats upset over approval

Senate OKs redistricting bill

United Press International
AUSTIN — The Senate voted 18-13 Monday to accept the House version of a congressional redistricting bill that had been the major issue in both the regular and special legislative sessions, sending the measure to the governor well ahead of today's midnight deadline.

Opponents of the redistricting plan say it could give Republicans as many as nine of the state's 27 congressional seats, including at least one now held by a Democrat. "It's perfectly obvious what happened here, we in the Democratic party, the majority party, have allowed ourselves to be mis-guided by the minority party, the Republican party," said Sen. Oscar Mauzy, D-Dallas.

Mauzy and Sen. Lloyd Doggett, D-Austin, said Speaker Bill Clayton had "cast his lot with the Republican party" to allow the bill to pass. Earlier in the day, Clayton had blocked an abortive attempt

to reopen redistricting negotiations and send the issue to conference committee in an attempt to return the version of the bill passed earlier by the Senate.

Liberal Democrats offered to refrain from filibustering in exchange for the opportunity to send the bill to conference committee, but Clayton refused to go along and forced the Senate to vote to either accept or to reject the House version of the plan.

Sen. Peyton McKnight, D-Tyler, argued the House should be given a chance to rescind its action on the bill it passed in the predawn hours Sunday.

"I think the House took a sorry bill and ruined it," McKnight said.

Sen. John Wilson, D-La Grange, who drafted the bill passed earlier by the Senate and supports the House changes, claimed he had sufficient support to send the bill to the governor.

"I think we've got 18 votes to concur plus a couple of maybes,"

Wilson said Sunday after conducting an informal poll of Senate members.

Speaker Bill Clayton, who drafted the major House changes in the redistricting bill, contends it would give Democrats 20 of the 27 congressional seats, increase the number held by Republicans from five to six, and create one "swing" district in Houston that would be almost evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats.

Wilson said he has found little significant difference in the House plan and the one he pushed through the Senate earlier.

"If there is any big difference I'd sure like for somebody to show it to me," he said.

With today's midnight adjournment of the special session approaching, Wilson acknowledged that liberals might try to filibuster against his bill and kill it in the final hours of the session.

"I think there are some people

who might want to talk for a while," he said. "But it'll be 39 or 40 hours until the end of the session, and I don't think anybody wants to talk quite that long."

Both houses met Sunday, dealing primarily with non-controversial items although the Senate did tentatively approve a proposed constitutional amendment providing a three cent per \$100 valuation state property tax to fund construction at state colleges outside the University of Texas and Texas A&M University systems.

House members refused to suspend rules to permit consideration Sunday of legislation to legalize Bingo games run by charitable organizations.

Texas voters last year approved a constitutional amendment authorizing the local option Bingo games, but lawmakers have been unable to agree on legislation regulating the games.



Photo by Jackie Fair

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