

Gramm remains unsure about special tax break

United Press International
HOUSTON — Rep. Phil Gramm, D-College Station, is one of the Texas congressmen who are still unsure of the political consequences of a \$75-a-day tax deduction allowed only for lawmakers, a Houston newspaper reported Thursday.

A new law which passed Congress last year allows members of Congress to deduct \$75 for each "congressional day" as an unitemized tax deduction. Currently, legislators are split over whether to write off more than \$19,000 each from their 1981 income tax returns.

A survey of Texas lawmakers conducted by the Houston Post revealed mixed attitudes toward the tax deduction, which has triggered mounting criticism across the country and within the Congress as well.

In a voice vote in the House and a 46-44 vote in the Senate,

Congress gave itself the unique tax advantage over ordinary citizens, which would allow House members to deduct \$19,650 for their 262 congressional days. Senators could take a \$19,200 deduction for their 256 days.

The bill could help some congressmen to reduce their \$60,662.50 salaries to almost zero for tax purposes when coupled with other tax deductions.

Republican Sen. John Tower supported the tax measure, but has not yet decided if he will take the deduction, the Post reported. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, a Democrat who opposed the bill, was not available for comment.

Gramm has not decided if he will take the deduction.

Rep. Ron Paul, a conservative Republican from Lake Jackson, and Rep. Mickey Leland, a liberal Democrat from Houston, said they both plan to take full \$75-a-

day deductions.

"I'm broke," said Leland, who added he thinks the deduction is legal.

Rep. Bill Archer, R-Houston, said he has compromised and is taking \$50-a-day for the time he spent working in Washington last year.

Rep. Jack Field, R-Humble, would not say what his plans were for the deduction, but in the past has backed efforts to repeal the bill. Rep. Charles Wilson, D-Lufkin, does not plan to take any of the deduction, but will deduct items for which he has receipts.

Rep. Charles Stenholm, D-Stamford, said he has no intentions of taking any of the deduction, saying the passage of the bill "did not meet the minimum standards of equity and fairness that the public has a right to expect from its elected officials."

Reps. Thomas Loeffler, R-Hunt, and Jack Hightower, D-Vernon, have each decided against taking the deduction. Rep. J.J. Pickle, D-Austin, has not decided how much of the deduction he will take.

Texas volunteer groups get awards from Reagan

United Press International
For the last 10 years, independent oil geologist Bobby Trimble has run a "Christmas in April" program for elderly and underprivileged Midland County residents. But Thursday he was on the receiving end.

His program and two others in Texas — a Houston convict halfway house and a Tenneco volunteer system — were honored by President Reagan for outstanding volunteer achievement.

The three Texas programs given the President's Volunteer Action Awards are among 18 chosen for the first-time awards sponsored by the national volunteer agency ACTION and Volunteer, the National Center for Citizen Involvement. The winners were chosen from 2,300 nominees from all over the country.

Trimble, 57, has for the past 10 years organized volunteers to repair the homes of older, disabled or low income residents.

"It started out with a group

from the YMCA," Trimble said. "We thought of cleaning up certain areas, then started kicking around the idea of working on elderly people's homes."

Since 1973 the program has repaired roofs, windows and plumbing and painted houses as well as building such things as wheelchair ramps on 600 to 700 homes. The group raised \$84,000 in donations last year for its work.

Trimble expects 3,000 volunteers to turn out April 24 for this year's installment. They are aiming to repair 144 homes.

"It's worked out real good," he said. "We're real proud of it."

Also honored by the president was New Directions, the Houston halfway house run by ex-convicts which tries to give ex-offenders jobs and a family style atmosphere to smooth their return to the "free world."

The program, which claims a 72 percent success rate, was founded in 1970 by ex-convict Sonny Wells upon release

from prison after serving 13 years of a life sentence. He died in 1975, but the program has grown under Pat McCoy, also an ex-con.

New Directions this year moved into a new specially built campus in north Houston and now serves more than 100 ex-convicts at a time. It has served 3,000 since founded.

"He (Wells) never had a family life until he worked for the warden while in prison," said secretary Georgia Jones, an ex-con herself. "He got the idea when he got out that if he started a house like this with a family atmosphere it would help ex-cons turn their lives around."

Also cited was Tenneco Inc. of Houston, recognized for its Volunteers in Assistance system in which 1,200 Tenneco volunteers and a total of \$75,000 in corporate money, was spent supporting various programs, including a center for the retarded.

Tenneco, the energy-based conglomerate, also was recog-

nized for sponsoring a statewide conference on effective corporate volunteerism.

Some 1,200 Tenneco employees worked in more than 40 community programs in 1981. The program founded in May 1979 works as a clearinghouse company employees volunteer skills with appropriate programs.

"We recognize the help in the various organizations. By acting as a clearinghouse we have solidated the strengths of the individuals already involved and recruited who perhaps had thought out it and never knew to go," Tenneco spokesman Tony DeHaas said.

"It's a way to help where we work and live. A corporation hope to putting our emphasis on this program that will help late people to become involved in volunteer programs and it has. We're happy with it."

WOMEN STUDENTS ORGANIZATION

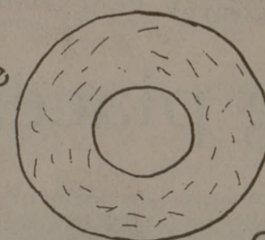
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El Paso-Juarez event starts with torch run

United Press International
EL PASO — When Margie Ranc booked a one-way flight last week to Austin the clerk was aghast to learn she would not need a return ticket. She planned to run back.

Ranc, manager of media relations for the city of El Paso's Convention and Visitor Bureau, was one of 15 runners between the ages of 15 and 52 participating this week in a 78-hour, 583-mile torch relay from the state capitol back to El Paso.

The purpose of the run was to open the 1982 edition of the El Paso-Juarez games, pitting the best athletes of the United States, Mexico and other nations in Olympic-style competition.

Highlighting the run across West Texas was the exchanging of torches Thursday Mexican runners who made a 210-mile trek from the capitol of the border state of Chihuahua.

On the U.S. side, this year's activities began Monday morning in Austin with a torch-lighting ceremony attended by emissaries from the governor's office.

Scheduled opening activities at the border were a soccer game between teams from West Germany, as well as a nighttime half-marathon through the streets of El Paso and Juarez, sister cities with a joint population of more than 1 million people. During the next few months there will be 26 events featuring everything from weight-lifting to 4-by-4 wheel drive rodeo.

El Paso Parks and Recreation Department Executive Director Rob Azar, who founded the games, says he would like to see the fledgling competition grow into a world class event, a kind of Pan American games along the Rio Grande.

"I see it as a chance to improve communications between our two countries, to help bridge cultural gaps that exist," Ranc

said. "Real differences which promote frustration, infighting, yet the game make a difference."

Most participants in the torch run can view it as a lifetime challenge — opportunity to breathe mountain winds, see rattlesnakes and other sights.

John Knox, 30, an analyst and marathon runner from Austin, admits to down the highway with its unique hazards.

Holding the replica Olympic flame in front of his face to block the glare of Texas sun, Knox said upon reaching El Paso that he had an unusual emblem on his face — the outline of a torch.

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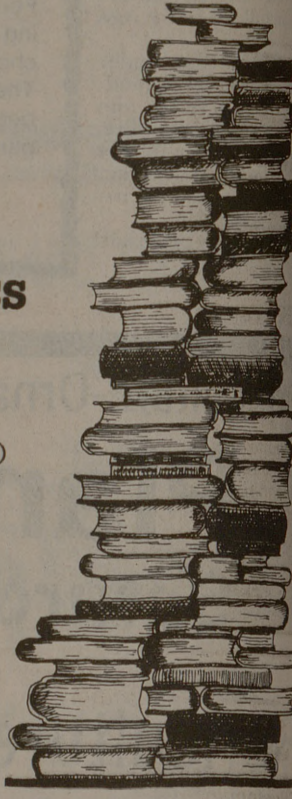
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