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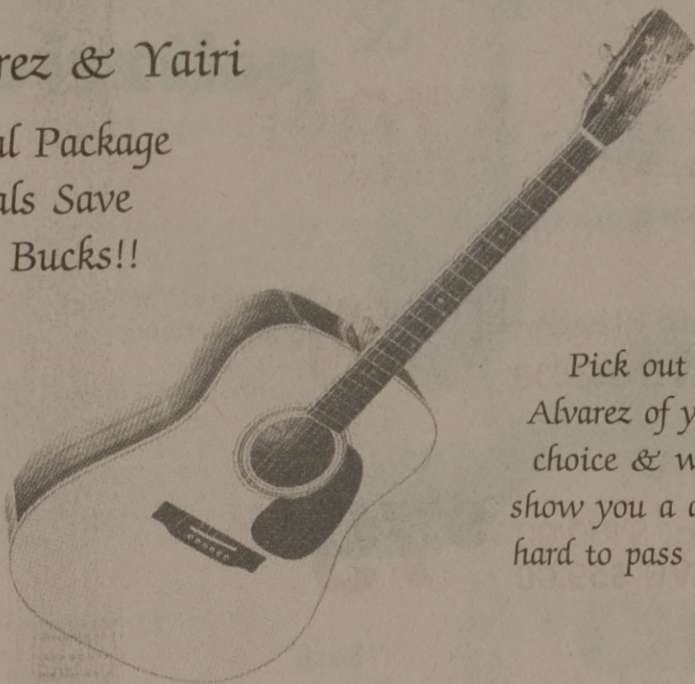


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Amendment is considered: Equality for victim, crook

United Press International
HOUSTON — A recommendation for a constitutional amendment giving victims the same rights as criminals is under consideration by members of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime.

The nine-member panel's public discussion Wednesday of recommendations under study revealed a concern among members that crime victims — often unaware of arrests or plea bargaining in their cases — need to be more involved in prosecution decisions.

The panel will form its recommendations based on testimony at a series of six hearings

concluded in Houston. Other concepts addressing victims of crimes included the passage of laws giving victims, as well as criminals, a right to speedy trial and laws that would require courts to sentence criminals to make damage payments to victims.

The panel refused to make public a draft of its tentative recommendations scheduled for delivery to President Reagan and Attorney General William French Smith by the end of the year. Changes were still in the works.

However, panel members expressed concern about leniency for sex offenders and the juvenile crime problem.

Panel member Ken Eikenberry said sex offenders and pornographers too often get jobs close to women and children because laws restrict employers' access to police records.

"The idea of making arrest records as opposed to conviction records available to potential employers is going to send up a rocket," said Eikenberry, Washington state attorney general. "I think it's right."

Clark County, Nev., District Attorney Robert Miller said officials might consider creating a new juvenile criminals category because many serious offenders automatically get lenient treat-

ment as juvenile delinquents. Lois Herrington, a prosecutor in Oakland, Calif., chairman of the task force, said one of the biggest tasks of the committee can be to educate the people aware of the problem.

"The victims have been treated poorly the past two years by an American criminal justice system striving to protect the rights of criminals," Herrington said.

"We don't want to see the rights of the criminal eroded," she said. "We're going to make recommendations we feel are in the need. Every single idea is workable."

Texas jobless rate rises

United Press International
Texas' unemployment rate continued to swell dramatically during September in the state's border communities and in Houston, analysts say.

Economic experts blame the decline in energy exploration and production and the devaluation of the Mexican peso for a 1.2 percent unemployment rate jump in Houston, raising the city's jobless rate to 8.2 percent. The rate was 6.4 percent in Dallas.

Texas Employment Commission analyst James Barnes esti-

mated 20,000 people were out of work this month in the Houston area.

In the border city of Laredo, unemployment reached 23.2 percent in September, up from August's 15.4 percent.

Economist Suzy Shoultz of Texas American Bankshares in Fort Worth predicted the border communities will continue to feel the pinch until Mexico finds a solution to its currency problems.

The economic climate in north central Texas is apparently buffered, at least for the pre-

sent, from severe unemployment. Dallas experienced one of the smallest monthly jumps among the state's cities, with a rise to 6.4 percent from 6 percent in August.

Ed McClelland of Republic Bank Corp. in Dallas said his company's figures "reflect a lot

of layoffs in the electronics industry, but we still seem to have a firm labor market."

Shoultz credited the Fort Worth area's diversified manufacturing for keeping employment picture relatively bright.

Wife to testify in bomb hearing

United Press International
HOUSTON — A Colorado woman, once charged in the \$15 million attempted extortion of Gulf Oil Chemicals Co., was subpoenaed to testify Thursday before a federal grand jury investigating the case.

Jill Renee Bird, 36, the common-law wife of alleged mastermind John McBride, 46, of Durango, Colo., will testify about her knowledge or lack of knowledge about the case, her attorney Robin Auld said.

Bird was charged with extortion, but charges were dropped when McBride agreed to unveil the extortion attempt for au-

thorities if Bird received a community.

Auld said Bird was innocent and was led to believe she was participating in a private investigation.

"No deal was cut," Auld said. "The grand jury is trying to get around and see how she knows."

McBride is being held in Pueblo, Colo., on a \$1 million bond. Timothy Justice, a man who admitted planting bombs inside Gulf's Bayou sprawling refinery in Baytown last month, was transferred to the Harris County jail under an assumed

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