

state

State leaders meet, discuss oil tax hike

United Press International
AUSTIN — Despite pleas for support from key state leaders, representatives of the oil and gas industry say they will continue to oppose a proposal to use increased taxes on oil and gas production as a way of paying for higher education needs.

Gov. Mark White, Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, House Speaker Gib Lewis and almost a dozen representatives of the energy industry met in White's private office late Tuesday. They discussed a proposal to increase oil and gas severance taxes by 1 percent to pay for construction at 17 state colleges and universities.

The schools, which do not share in the oil-rich Permanent University Fund enjoyed by the University of Texas and Texas A&M, are currently without a source of funding for needed construction and repair projects.

"We don't think the proposal is timely or fair, particularly since we already provide more than a quarter of the state's revenue as it is," said Julian Martin of the Texas Independent Producers & Royalty Owners Association. "We have a mandate from our members to oppose any increased tax on oil and gas, and until we have a mandate otherwise we will oppose it with vigor."

Faced with declining state revenues, legislators have been laboring over various proposals to fund construction at the 17 colleges.

Current proposals call for the creation of a \$2 billion fund to benefit the schools. To pay for the higher education fund, Sens. Grant Jones, D-Abilene and Bob Vale, D-San Antonio, proposed the 1 percent increase in severance taxes.

Such an increase would yield approximately \$400 million a year in additional revenue and would allow the higher education fund to reach its \$2 billion cap in about six years.

Interest from the fund would be used to pay off school bonds.

Hobby has been one of the leading supporters of the proposed tax increase, saying that the

oil and gas industry is a logical source for the added funds.

After the meeting, Hobby said he still favored the tax increase.

"If there is going to be a dedicated fund for any purpose, there has to be a dedicated source of funding," Hobby said. "Everybody has a reason why it should be the other guy."

However, White still declined to endorse the proposal, although he conceded new revenues must be raised if the state is to maintain projected levels of spending.

Sen. Carl Parker, the sponsor of a constitutional amendment to create the higher education fund, said he would continue to push for a dedicated source of revenue for the schools.



Timber!

staff photo by Guy Wood

The recent windy weather on campus finally took its toll on the massive oak tree located near the Corps Quad. Cadet Derrick Day, a junior chemical

engineering major from Austin, surveys the damage suffered by some of the bicycles from a unique vantagepoint on the tree trunk.

Texas nuke site opposed

United Press International
HEREFORD — Texas Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower promised Panhandle residents that he will do everything in his power to prevent the federal government from placing a high level nuclear waste repository in the region.

Two areas of land in the Texas Panhandle, one in northern Deaf Smith County and one in Swisher County, have been

judged by the Department of Energy as possible sites because of their salt dome formations.

About 150 Panhandle residents attended a town meeting in Hereford Tuesday night to voice their opinions on a DOE proposal to drill a deep test shaft in Deaf Smith County.

Hightower, who led the Austin delegation, told the residents his office would do everything he can to stop the federal

government's waste dumping plans.

The Texas Senate has approved and sent to the House a bill that would require DOE to obtain a permit from the state Water Commission before proceeding with the drilling.

Environmentalists have said they are concerned about the effects of drilling such a shaft into the giant Ogallala aquifer, a

deep reserve of underground water shared by six states.

The DOE will conduct formal hearings later this month on the proposed Panhandle sites.

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Officers to undergo psychological testing

United Press International
AUSTIN — Two city police officers accused of brutalizing demonstrators at a February Ku Klux Klan march will undergo psychological testing but will not be disciplined for their actions.

Austin Police Chief Frank Dyson said Tuesday that two of the officers accused of using excessive force in the arrest of a Hispanic activist Paul Hernan-

dez would be tested to determine their emotional fitness in highly stressful situations.

Dyson said the test results could affect future assignments for Officers Charles Pittman and Hector Polanco. He said counseling had been discontinued for Officer Rupert Ortiz, a third policeman accused in the beating of Hernandez.

The chief said no disciplinary

action would be taken against the officers. A Travis County grand jury reported March 30 that there was no basis for criminal charges against any of the officers.

Dyson said police were pushed into using excessive force by the anti-Klan demonstrators. Thirteen people were arrested and 11 others were injured during the march.

Dallas lead pollution case called a disgrace, tragedy

United Press International
DALLAS — A Dallas lead pollution case may be the worst case of irresponsibility by the Environmental Protection Agency, Georgia congressman charges.

U.S. Rep. Elliott Levitas, D-Texas, toured a west Dallas lead smelter Tuesday and said that not acting the EPA exposed humans to hazardous chemical contamination.

"It was a major example of exposing human beings to the

hazardous effects of chemical contamination when action could have been taken," Levitas said. "I think it's a crime, a disgrace, a tragedy."

Testimony last month before Levitas' subcommittee indicated ex-Deputy EPA Director John Hernandez blocked a proposed lead clean up in Dallas.

A member of Levitas' subcommittee, Congressman Guy Molinari, D-N.Y., said it was Hernandez' action concerning

the Dallas lead case that led directly to his resignation last month.

Three other congressmen joined Levitas for the tour of the RSR Corp. lead smelter.

U.S. Rep. Martin Frost, D-Texas, who represents the district where the smelters are located, said he intends to ask William Ruckelshaus, nominated to head the EPA, to instruct the agency to negotiate with the smelters to voluntarily clean up.

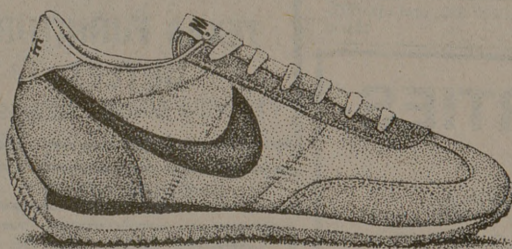
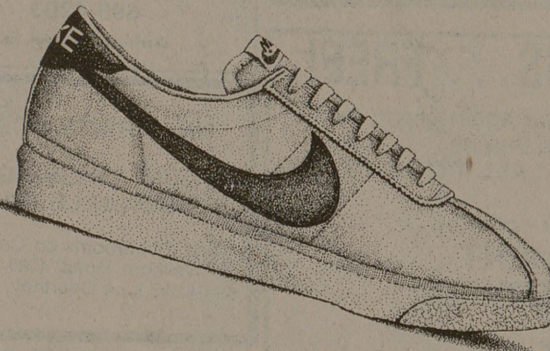
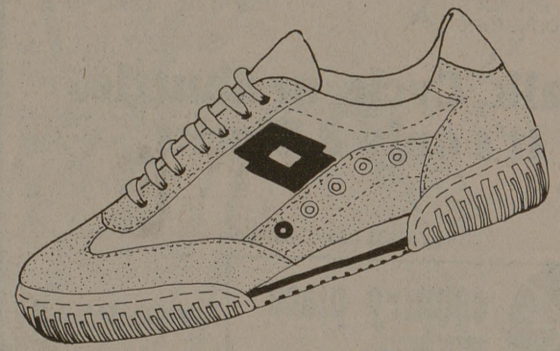
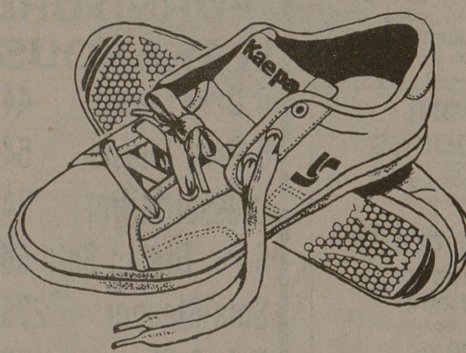
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