

Proposed TDC budget aims for out-of-prison programs

United Press International
AUSTIN — A vote is expected this week on proposals to redirect millions of dollars from the Texas Department of Corrections budget toward out-of-prison programs and to eliminate cut-rate housing and discontinue food allowances to TDC employees.

It's a pretty dramatic action," said Sen. Kent Caperton, D-Bryan. But he felt such action is justified in crisis times.

The package, sponsored by Sen. Ray Farabee, D-Wichita Falls, calls for placing an emphasis on speeding up the parole process, creating community re-stitution centers and increasing funding for intensive probation and halfway house programs.

Farabee's proposed budget reductions could increase the funding for those programs.

Under Farabee's proposals,

TDC's proposed budget of nearly \$800 million would be reduced a minimum of nearly \$40 million over the coming biennium and a maximum of nearly \$120 million.

Farabee also has taken aim at a variety of "perks," such as cut-rate housing and food prices, afforded to approximately 1,000 employees of TDC.

Currently, qualifying TDC employees are given housing at

prices that range from nothing to \$50 a month for the largest accommodations. Employees are not charged for utilities.

Many employees also are allowed to buy food produced on the prison's farms for a total cost of \$142 per family member a year. Farabee said that amount should be increased to at least \$285 annually, with the stipulation that employees may only receive food that would not be

used by inmates.

Farabee said prison employees also should start paying for other services, such as laundry and dry cleaning, which they now receive free.

"I don't think it's too much to ask," he said. "I pay for my own dry cleaning."

Farabee's proposals are pending before the Senate Finance Committee and should be voted on later in the week.

Bill urges child support payment

United Press International
AUSTIN — Along with other house business Wednesday, the author of a measure to allow garnishment of wages of parents who fall behind in child support payments says the bill could save Texas \$40 million a year in welfare payments.

Under the proposed constitutional amendment that won initial House approval Wednesday on a 135-7 vote, courts could order employers to withhold portions of a worker's paycheck if the employee missed at least one child support payment.

"What I'm going to ask you to do is to come to the aid of our

children," said Rep. Rene Oliveira, D-Brownsville, the amendment's sponsor. "The framers of our constitution did not intend for us to protect those who refuse to support their children."

The proposal, which still must pass the Senate, would go before the voters in November 1984.

Texas has had a constitutional ban on garnishment of wages for any purpose since 1876 and is one of only five states with no provisions to allow courts to withhold wages of a parent who refuses to pay child support.

Oliveira said if the proposal increased child support payments by only 40 percent across the state, Texas could save an estimated \$40 million a year in welfare payments.

The Department of Human Resources estimates that more than two-thirds of households receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children require the welfare payments because they lack the support of an absent parent.

In other action Wednesday, the House tentatively approved a bill that would require trucks carrying loose materials that might fly out onto highways to

cover their loads with tarpaulins.

"Anyone who ever had a windshield cracked, anyone who was ever sandblown or who saw

litter blown on the highway from trucks carrying loose material should be in favor of this bill," said author Rep. Ed Emmett, R-Kingswood.

Student patrols to aid travellers in Mexico

United Press International
JUAREZ, Mexico — In an effort to encourage American tourists to feel comfortable in Mexico, tourism students from the University of Juarez have begun patrols in bright blue pickup trucks.

Francisco Balderas Munoz, Mexican federal tourism coordinator in Juarez, said the program is being tested this week in the city located across the border from El Paso.

The patrols offer directions, maps to pass out and will

assist as they can in disputes with police. Balderas has solicited suggestions from American tourists for other types of aid they would like.

"We want American visitors to feel confident here and to know there is a special group of people who are ready to help in the event of problems," he said.

"We are aware of all the fears and insecurities tourists have when they visit the border. We want to roll out the red carpet for our friends from the United States," he said.

Participating students are from the School of Tourism of the University of Juarez.

Balderas said the tourists frequently complain of police officers who stop American motorists and demand a "mordida" or bribe, literally, a bribe.

The student patrol does not have the authority to question police actions, Baldera said, but members have been instructed to record the officer's name and badge number if he is seeking a bribe and report the officer to his superiors.

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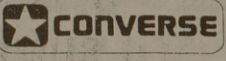


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