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Judge tell parents to testify — or else

United Press International
HOUSTON — A judge Tuesday warned parents of a 17-year-old accused killer they may face jail and a \$1,000 fine for refusing to obey an order to testify before a grand jury.

State District Judge William Hatten scheduled a June 27 hearing to determine if Bernard and Odette Port should be held in contempt of court for refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating their son, David.

David Port, 17, a high school junior, is charged with murder in the June 7 shooting death of mail carrier Debora Sue Schatz, 23, of Houston.

Hatten said the couple could face indefinite jail terms and a \$1,000 fine if found in contempt of court.

The Ports appeared before a grand jury on Monday after Hatten denied a defense motion to quash their grand jury subpoenas. A court reporter who recorded the grand jury proceedings testified the couple appeared before the panel for more than an hour, but refused to answer questions relating to the death of the postal worker.

In response to further questioning by the judge, the couple reassured they would rather go to jail than testify against their son.

Prosecutor Brad Beers said the

grand jury investigating the younger Port would meet again Friday. A preliminary hearing also was scheduled Friday to determine if prosecutors had enough evidence to refer the case to a grand jury.

Beers said the Ports' testimony is considered crucial to the grand jury investigation.

"If we didn't feel the testimony was necessary, we wouldn't be going through this process," Beers said.

Police found bullet holes, blood stains and a package of undelivered mail while searching the Port home after Schatz disappeared. The Ports told police their son had been missing since June 7 — the day Schatz disappeared.

Authorities have questioned why the Ports did not report the blood stains or that their son was missing until police discovered the evidence.

However, Beers emphasized: "We've said all along Mr. and Mrs. Port had not been involved in any criminal conduct."

Hatten previously granted the couple immunity from prosecution for their testimony.

Beers said the prosecution wanted to question the Ports about their son's activities.

SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly

SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly

Senate passes bill requiring safety seats

United Press International
AUSTIN — Even though it was not in the governor's call for the special session, the Texas Senate Tuesday passed a bill that requires parents to utilize child safety seats when transporting children 4 years and younger.

The measure, which was the first adopted by either house in the special session, could have been killed by a single objection because it was not included in Gov. Mark White's agenda for the 30-day special session.

But the bill's sponsor, Sen. Carl Parker, D-Port Arthur, headed off any dissent on the popular measure and also predicted similar treatment next week in the House.

"I think it would be pretty tough to get up and kill this bill with all the public attention focused on it," Parker said.

Parker has tried to enact the bill in the past four legislative sessions. The bill also was the first Senate measure adopted last year, but it died in the House because it was not set for

floor debate until the waning days of the session.

Parker was incensed when the bill was killed and he threatened to filibuster other measures unless White allowed the proposal to be considered in the current special session.

Although White has not included the measure in his special session agenda, Parker said the governor had no objection to the bill being considered. White also has indicated he will sign the measure if it is approved by both houses.

Texas currently is one of only

three states that do not require the use of auto safety restraints for small children. Texas also leads the nation in the number of infant deaths caused by traffic accidents, Parker said.

"There are hundreds of children being killed because of uncaring parents who put adult convenience ahead of child safety," Parker said.

Under Parker's bill, parents would be required to use child safety seats when transporting children 4 and younger. The proposal also sets fines ranging from \$25 to \$50 for

failing to use the seats. The penalty could be averted if a parent acquires a safety seat within 10 days of the offense.

Critics of the bill have said it would place a financial burden on poor families or parents with several children. However, Parker and House sponsor Rep. Gonzalo Barrios have argued that the seats are available for free from many hospitals and civic groups.

The Texas Coalition for Child Passenger Safety said 78 children were killed last year

Homosexuals gain civil service protection

United Press International
HOUSTON — The City Council Tuesday narrowly approved an amendment extending civil service protection to homosexuals over the protests of opponents filling the hall outside the council chambers.

Singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," religious groups and a sprinkling of Klansmen stood outside the chambers, which were also filled with sign-carrying protesters.

Additional policemen were sent to City Hall to control the crowd.

The council voted 8-7 in favor of a resolution that prohibits the city from discriminating against anyone

in its affirmative action programs on the basis of "sexual orientation."

It then voted 9-6 in favor of an ordinance that rewrites the city civil service statutes to prohibit discrimination against homosexuals.

After the vote, the crowd chanted for the impeachment of Mayor Kathy Whitmire, who made a tour of gay bars last fall after her re-election

to thank them for their support of her campaign.

Anthony Hall, sponsor of the proposals, said the city would not be in the position of recruiting homosexuals for jobs.

"It only prohibits us from denying the right of making a living for anyone based on what they do at home after they leave work," he said.

There was no public debate on the

matter as the council voted 8-7 not to table a vote until Wednesday, when 68 people have requested time to address the council on the issue.

Protesters in the chamber carried signs asking the council not to turn Houston into the next Sodom and Gomorrah.

Council member Christin Hartung, who voted against the proposals, said she did not believe anyone in the gay community was being protected by the measure, but added that she had never heard of discrimination against gays being a problem in city hiring.

"I know there are gays employed in every department in the city,

some of them in high-level jobs don't believe this legislation accomplishes anything. Matters of discrimination should be determined in court of laws, not by a weak, watered-down version of affirmative action," she said.

Councilman John Goodner, who placed a full page advertisement in the Houston Chronicle Monday alerting the city to the upcoming vote, said the council "had shot itself in the foot today by prohibiting public discussion on it."

Goodner said he doubted a proposal to put the issues on a referendum vote in the next city election would be supported by the council.

Houston City Council approves amendment

United Press International
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