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Official bothered about exemption for country clubs

United Press International

AUSTIN — The chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee said Tuesday he was upset that the state comptroller's office decided to exempt country club dues from a new state sales tax on amusements.

'The reason I'm upset is that we didn't want someone to be able to say 'here we are taxing a poor kid going to the movie, but not the millionaire going to the country club," said Rep. Stan Schlueter, D-Killeen.

"That's a big deal, that's a big hit (on revenues)," said Schlueter, noting that some country club dues

range as high as \$10,000 per year. But Claudia Stravato, deputy comptroller, said a tax policy committee within the comptroller's office decided country club dues should not be taxed because they are

She said fees collected for golf and tennis at country clubs are

But Schlueter said it was the Leg-islature's intent that country club dues be taxed as an amusement.

"In the future, if you have any problem understanding what the bill meant, call me," Schlueter told Stra-

Meanwhile, Schlueter's committee, the primary architect of the re-cord \$4.6 billion tax bill passed last summer, got some negative feedback from the comptroller's office on the massive tax bill.

Stravato outlined several problems experienced by consumers and merchants. She said the comptrol-ler's office has logged 121,000 tele-

phone calls about the new tax has hired 85 of the 120 new wo needed to administer them.

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One problem, she said, is that state is being forced to issue sale permits to some 10,000 chil who are newspaper carries Texas.

Stravato said the new tax on paper sales is causing headache cause parents are being forced sign contracts for their children newspapers who now come the sales tax.

The paper carriers, many of them minors, also must collega keep detailed records on sales

receipts. "We simply would like to see exemption restored," said Stra She said the comptroller's has asked the attorney genera fice for an advisory opinion or constitutionality of the newspa tax. She said lawyers for the o troller believe the tax may be stitutional because it impede First Amendment rights of new pers.

Stravato also said merchants having trouble figuring the news eighth sales tax because of the numbered rate.

That is our most consistent plaint," she said. "They can't a pute it in their heads and manyn chines can't compute it."

If merchants round down the ure, they must make up the defi and if they round it up, the ex must be paid to the state, she said

Maverick minister arrested at the altar

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on the altar by sheriff's deputies Tuesday and carted off to jail to serve a 90-day sentence for defying a court order.

"I must obey God and not man," the Rev. D. Douglas Roth told Allegheny County Common Pleas Judge Emil Narick in refusing to comply with a court order barring him from preaching at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Clairton.

rick fined Roth \$1,200 and sent him off to a Pittsburgh jail to serve a 90day sentence on civil contempt

"He can purge himself at any-time," Narick said. "He has the key to the jailhouse in his pocket. Narick said everyone must obey the law, adding that Roth would be freed if he promised to comply with the court order.

'To do otherwise would make a mockery of the law," he said. "When you make announcements to the public about disobeying the law ... you must accept the consequences, referring to Roth's Sunday sermon in which he said: "I am not called to

appear before courts and judges." Roth was suspended on Oct. 17 by Bishop Kenneth May of the West Virginia-Western Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church for supporting the Denominational Ministry Strategy, a controversial clergymen's activist group.

Since his suspension, Roth has delivered a sermon every Sunday in defiance of May's order, but on Nov. 2 Narick upheld the bishop's action and ordered Roth to stop preaching. Roth ignored the judge's order

and barricaded himself inside his former church Nov. 5, skipping a Friday hearing on a contempt of

The minister had previously said if he were to be arrested for defying the court order, he must be taken from his altar. Two Allegheny County sheriff's deputies arrested

May said he had appointed al member committee to investiga whether Roth is guilty of "willful regard of the constitution and b laws" of the church.

The maximum penalty would "disposition," barring him in heading any church in the Luther Church in America. The comm will hold its first meeting in t weeks, May said.

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