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Bill filed to raise legal age

United Press International

AUSTIN — Sen. Bill Sarpalius, D-Amarillo, Wednesday filed legislation that would raise the legal drinking age in Texas to 20 next year and 21 in 1986, and bring the state in compliance with federal law.

Sarpalius said unless Texas acts to raise its drinking age, the state will lose some \$100 million in federal highway funds.

"The main issue here is not merely the saving of federal funds, but rather the savings in human lives that this bill would bring about," he said.

Sarpalius, who sponsored a 1981 bill that raised the minimum age to 19, has failed in recent sessions to win approval of a bill to raise the age to 21.

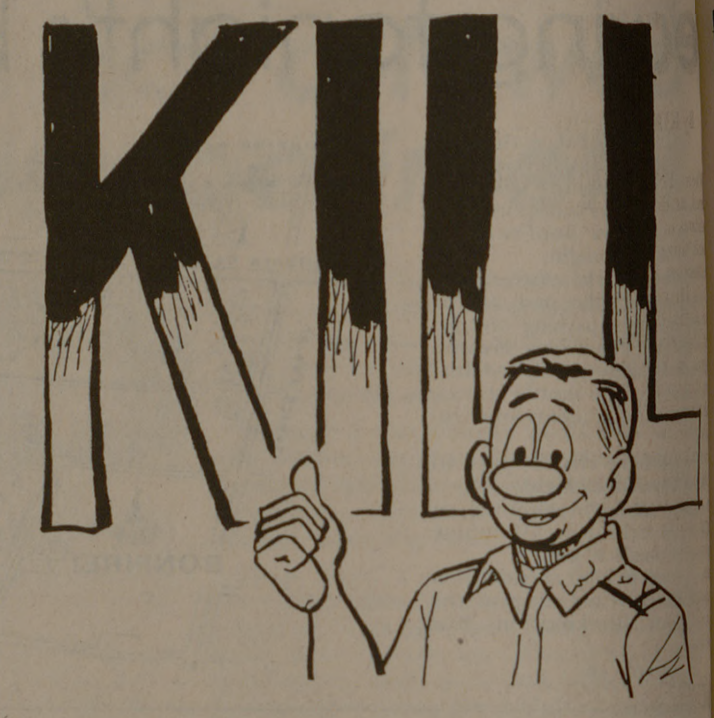
But he acknowledged that penalties accompanying the National Minimum Drinking Age Act passed by Congress should persuade Texas lawmakers to act in the session beginning Jan. 8.

Sarpalius said Texas Department of Public Safety statistics showed that the number of people 18 and under involved in alcohol-related fatal accidents dropped more than 19 percent after the legal age was raised to 19.

"Those in opposition to raising the legal age state that it will not stop teens from obtaining alcohol, but the truth is that it will go a long way towards lowering the number of teens drinking and dying on our streets and highways," he said.

Sarpalius' bill would raise the minimum age to 20 on Sept. 1, 1985, and to 21 on Sept. 1, 1986.

Slouch By Jim Earle



Twins separated after 18-hours

United Press International

GALVESTON — Siamese twin girls were doing "very well" following an 18-hour operation to separate them and, despite the need for further surgery, should develop normally, their doctor said Wednesday.

The lengthy operation was complicated by a shared biliary tract, which empties toxic bile from the liver into the intestine, said Dr. Thom Lobe, chief of pediatric surgery at John Sealy Hospital.

Doctors also had to separate a diaphragm, breastbone, portion of intestine and a large liver shared by the twins — Alma and Ashley. The surgery began at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday and ended about 1:30 a.m. Wednesday.

The common biliary tract and a common liver duct had to be separated and tracts constructed for each twin. The liver, which had four lobes compared to the normal three, was divided after the tracts were connected to the organ.

Two individual vascular systems supporting the liver made it easier to separate the organ, Lobe said.

"The first week post operative is the most critical," he said. "What we're going to be watching very carefully over the next week is to make sure the livers are draining properly. The babies are doing very well," he said. "They at this time are in our infant special care unit, where they are being ventilated so they won't have to be working too hard. We're giving them some medication to keep them drowsy and relaxed."

The twins will undergo additional surgery in the future to remove pieces of a plastic material used to help close the abdominal cavity.

"The children should develop like any other children," Lobe said.

Although the twins were doing equally well, one has a crooked spinal column. The condition will be evaluated in the future to determine treatment, said Lobe, who did not specify which twin had the problem.

The parents, a Beaumont couple, were "very optimistic and pleased" with the surgery, said hospital spokesman Irv Power. The parents have requested their names not be made public.

"The mother came down to the special care unit and visited with the children about 3 a.m.," he said. "Although she couldn't hold them, she touched them and counted all their toes and fingers to make sure they were there."

The prognosis was "very good," Power said.

The girls were rushed into surgery when they were less than a day old because an exposed area of the shared intestine made them extremely vulnerable to infection, said Dr. Joan Richardson. Siamese twins usually are separated only after they are more mature.

The babies were delivered by Caesarean section to the 33-year-old Beaumont woman about 9 a.m. Monday. Doctors were prepared for the unusual birth because an ultrasound test had revealed the twins were joined.

Senator satisfied with race

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said Wednesday he felt good about his unsuccessful race for the Senate's top leadership post and was ready to turn his attention to working on the national budget.

"I feel great," Domenici told New Mexico reporters after Kansas Sen. Robert Dole was elected majority leader by his colleagues. "I worked hard and I did the best I could."

"I don't feel disappointed," he said. "After my marvelous victory in New Mexico, to borrow the words of some of my staff, these last eight or nine days have been the frosting on the cake."

"I would very much have liked to take the challenges of the job on but I still have a chairmanship of a very important committee and important duties on two other committees — appropriations and energy — and I look forward to doing my job."

Domenici, 52, was eliminated in the second round of voting in a closed session for Republican senators to fill their top seven leadership positions — just as he told his wife, Nancy, he might be.

Domenici said he gave Dole a note promising to be at the "beck and call" of the new majority leader and his newly elected assistant, Sen. Al Simpson of Wyoming.

"I've already told Sen. Dole and Sen. Simpson the Budget Committee is ready to do its job and do it in a timely matter to bring a broad resolution to the Senate floor," he said.

Domenici said several of his colleagues told him they knew he had a "big job in front of me as budget chairman" and not to take the loss personally as "there were some committee dynamics involved."

He said Sens. Bob Packwood of Oregon and John Danforth of Missouri worked hard on Dole's behalf as the Kansas senator's election cleared the way for them to become chairmen of two major committees.

Domenici, who is conservative on fiscal matters and moderate on social issues, often had been mentioned as a likely candidate for the leadership spot of retiring Senate Republican leader Howard Baker of Tennessee.

But he said he did not decide to seek the majority leader's job until a few weeks before he was easily elected to his third term. He said if he had it to do over, "I would have started about six months ago in earnest" to line up support.

Domenici spent the night before the leadership election visiting with a neighbor who brought champagne to toast his race and when he left home early Wednesday, he told his wife he thought he might be eliminated in the second round.

He thought he was walking in to the old Senate chamber with 11 votes, but received just nine on the first round and 10 on the second one that knocked him out of contention.

Murder suspected in 27-year-old case

United Press International

EL PASO - Sheriff's Department investigators said Wednesday they have enough evidence to seek a murder indictment in the mysterious disappearance of an El Paso couple 27 years ago.

Capt. Alfredo Bonilla said investigators six months ago reopened the now famous case of the missing Pattersons, William Durrell "Pat" and his wife, Margaret.

The Pattersons were owners of a photo supply company when they vanished on March 4 or 5, 1957. Officers found themselves at a virtual dead end in the investigation, with very few clues to their disappearance.

Bonilla says investigators will present evidence of the Pattersons' murder to a grand jury. He declined to say whether the bodies of the couple have been recovered. He says no arrests have been made yet, but deputies "are continuing to interview a number of witnesses and possible suspects."

Although the couple disappeared from Patterson Photo Supply in March of 1957, their disappearance was not reported until Aug. 15, 1957, when a family friend, Cecil Ward, became worried over their continued absence and reported it to then-Sheriff Jimmy Hicks.

Investigators backtracked and found the Pattersons had last been seen at their store on the evening of March 4, 1957 and later that night at their home where Ward helped Patterson work on his 18-foot motorboat.

Officers said they also found the company accountant, Herbert Roth, running the business.

Published accounts at the time reported Roth appeared unworried about the couple's whereabouts, officers said.

Roth told officers he had received a telegram from Dallas, signed by Patterson, on March 14, 1957. He said the telegram told him to manage the shop, use the Pattersons' Cadillac and sell their travel trailer.

Roth said the telegram told him to maintain the accounts but put over all operation of the business in the hands of another family friend, D.D. Kirkland.

Officers said they were never able to obtain the telegram mentioned by Roth.

Detectives found no evidence of disruption or foul play at the Patterson home, in a quiet residential area of West El Paso.

Further investigation revealed that Mrs. Patterson had never reclaimed an expensive fur coat from a tailor, where she had left it for alterations.

In addition, what had been described by friends as "a small fortune" in Mrs. Patterson's jewelry was missing from the home, officers said.

The 18-foot motorboat had disappeared. It was discovered months later, decaying in the yard of an El Paso residence. The resident belonged to kin of a company employee, who had brought it there. The employee told police Patterson told him to take the boat.

When officers contacted Patterson's father in Chicago in 1957, then 71-year-old Luther Patterson was angry over publicity given to the case and insisted his son and daughter-in-law were alive and safe.

The elder Patterson, now deceased, told a reporter in 1957 his son had disappeared periodically before. "He just wants to rest," he said.

Patterson Photo Supply was placed in receivership in January 1958 and went out of business. Patterson's out-of-town relatives said the couple's home. It has changed ownership several times since.

Over the years, police said, the case of the missing Pattersons drifted into the realm of folklore and mystery. Then, six months ago, Bonilla and Gabbert quietly reopened the case.