

STATE AND LOCAL

Texas senators approve \$36.8 billion budget bill

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The Senate's \$36.8 billion version of a 1986-87 state spending bill was approved Wednesday with the warning it can be financed only if lawmakers also approve about \$700 million in so-called "non-tax" revenue raising bills.

Sen. Grant Jones, D-Abilene, Senate Finance Committee chairman, said he would seek debate next week on the measure, which is a rewrite of the \$36.4 billion bill passed by the House.

The Texas State Employees Union immediately served notice it would oppose the Senate bill because it does not contain a state employee pay raise that was in the House bill. The House proposed a 3-percent-a-

year pay increase, provided the pending revenue-raising bills pass.

Members of Senate committee said it would be up to the 10-member conference committee, which will settle Senate-House differences, to see if there is a pay raise.

"This bill can be afforded without new taxes only if we pass these other bills," said Sen. Ray Farabee, D-Wichita Falls. "Otherwise the money is just not there."

The major revenue-raising measures, none of them finally passed, include:

- At least \$275 million the next two years from state college tuition increases.
- More than \$220 million from increased state fees, permits and

court costs, including a hefty increase in oil and gas regulation charges.

• A net revenue increase of \$72.5 million by decreasing the state's contribution to the retirement funds of state employees and teachers.

The Senate's proposed appropriations from all sources is 4.35 percent above 1984-85 spending and would require \$26.2 billion from state general revenue funds, an increase of \$1.37 billion or 5.5 percent above current spending.

The Senate committee also unanimously approved Wednesday a package of increased fees, permits and court costs that would raise more than \$220 million.

Child abuse

Proposed bills protect parents' rights

Associated Press

AUSTIN — Rep. Bill Blackwood, R-Mesquite, has two legislative proposals he says will protect parents accused of abusing their children after being "outraged by cases of parents' rights being violated in suspected child abuse cases."

"Child abuse is indeed a shocking crime," Blackwood said Tuesday. "But equally disturbing is the fact that innocent parents have been harassed and even had their children taken away without knowledge of who took them and why."

"Taking a child from his or her parent without notifying the parent

who took the child or why is a clear and blatant violation of the parent's right," Blackwood said.

The bill proposes requiring the agency to present written notice to the parents explaining why the child was taken, who reported the case, who to contact in the agency for information and a summary of the parents' rights.

The second bill would hold people who make a false report of child abuse liable for damage to the child and any other person affected by the report.

It also allows false reports made by a parent involved in a custody suit

to be introduced as evidence against the reporting parent.

"Persons who report child abuse are presently immune from both civil and criminal liability unless the report is made with malice or in bad faith," Blackwood said. "Nowhere is false reporting more prevalent than in cases involving a custody suit."

Agencies would be allowed to investigate the child abuse reports made by one parent against the other and could terminate the investigation if the complaining parent refused to sign a statement of liability if the reports are false.

Lawmakers OK bill to entice Navy

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The Legislature approved Tuesday a \$25 million package aimed at enticing the Navy into picking Corpus Christi or the Houston-Galveston area as the home port for the battleship Wisconsin.

Senators, in a 23-1 vote, approved an amended version of a House-approved, home port bill. Later Tuesday, the House voted 121-9 to accept the Senate version.

The Navy is expected to pick the

home port for the battleship by the middle of this month.

The Senate version of the bill makes \$17 million available from the water assistance fund in fiscal 1986. Another \$8 million would go to the home port trust fund the following year.

That money would come from the 1-cent-a-pack cigarette tax that is now dedicated to the state local parks fund, which receives about \$18.5 million a year.

The House had proposed taking \$15 million from the state's water as-

sistance fund, \$5.4 million from the state leasing program and \$600,000 from the operator and chauffeur's license fund for a total of \$21 million.

Sen. J.E. "Buster" Brown, R-Lake Jackson, said he believed the House could live with the Senate proposal. House members approved the Senate changes with no debate.

Brown said the state funding was contingent upon whether the Navy selects a Texas site.

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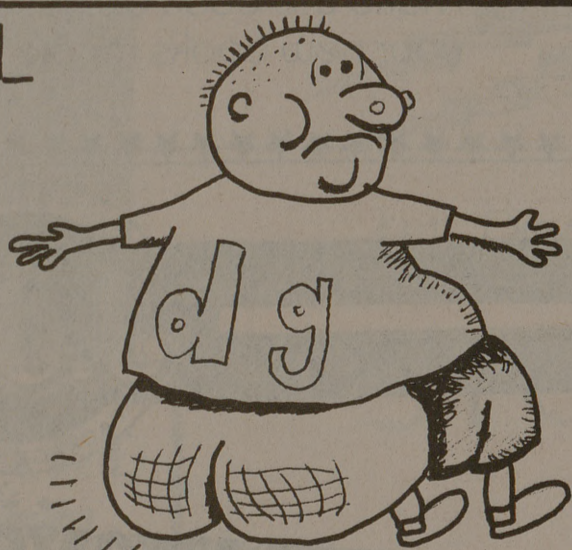
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