## Water plan gain support

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AUSTIN - A key Hispanic group Wednesday threw its support behind the proposed \$1.4 billion statewide water plan, saying it is crucial for continued growth and offers adequate environmental safeguards.
"In light of the federal retreat

from funding water-related projects, it's important that we in Texas take care of our own future water needs," said Ruben Bonilla, chairman of Mexican American Democrats of

Joining Bonilla were state Reps. Hugo Berlanga, D-Corpus Christi, and Al Luna, D-Houston. Berlanga, speaker pro tem of the Texas House, predicted the water plan will pass with widespread support from

Hispanics and others.
"I think the support is going to be there for us to be successful," Berlanga said. "You're going to see the continuation of bipartisanship. I think you'll see an all-out effort."

He said predictions of a low voter turnout for the Nov. 5 election may be wrong. Because of water ration-1 ing and other problems in more than 200 cities this summer and last, Berlanga said the public is well The water plan is being presented as two constitutional amendments on the fall ballot. Voter approval is

required for the plan to take effect. Proposition I would authorize \$980 million in state bonds to raise money for construction of reservoirs, pipelines, treatment plants

The water plan is being presented as two constitutional amendments on the fall ballot. Voter approval is required for the plan to take effect.

and flood-control projects. It would create a \$250 million insurance fund to guarantee water bonds issued by cities and other political subdivi-

Proposition 2 would authorize \$200 million in bonds for low-interest loans to farmers to purchase wa-

ter-saving irrigation equipment.

Bonilla said his 7,500-member group will seek some of the \$1.25

million the plan's backers are raising and would use the money for radio and television ads and a get-out-thevote drive.

Luna, chairman of the Mexican American Legislative Caucus, said he expected many Hispanic lawmak-ers to campaign actively for the plan. Berlanga also voiced unhappiness with the Audubon Society, which on Tuesday appropried

Tuesday announced its opposition to the plan. The group said the plan fails to adequately protect the environment and opens up water development to political deal-making.

"It's most unfortunate they took that position," he said. "We went out of our way in the legislative process to accommodate every environmen-

tal group.
"It took us quite a while to ever get the Audubon Society to contribute and to provide input in the negotiations on the plan.

"We're at the crossroads. If we're going to continue to prosper, if we're going to continue to have the type of educational programs we want, it is extremely crucial that the voters approve Propositions 1 and 2 come November," Berlanga said.

Voters will decide a total of 14

proposed constitutional amend-ments.



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# Venezuelan economy hurt by 'a taste for easy money'

CARACAS, Venezuela — Last year, Venezuelans, now in the midst of their worst economic crisis in years, spent some \$923 million playing the horses, and on lotteries and

the forms of gambling.

The amount equals 6 percent of all of Venezuela's foreign earnings per year, or \$57.7 per capita in this country of 16 million.

"We are still running after easy wealth," says writer and social critic Arturo Uslar Pietri.

Every Thursday afternoon and Sunday morning, long lines of Venezuelans can be seen in major cities

their tickets stamped for "5 and 6," the national horse-playing game.

With as little as 45 cents and quite a good deal of luck, a gambler could make up to \$615,000 if his ticket

urns out to be the only winner.
"I would be settled for life," says
Angel Pena, a 36-year-old bricklayer
who once won \$185 in the "5 and 6," and regularly plays horses, lotteries and "terminales" (an illegal lottery where people win if the number they bought is the same as the last two digits of some national lotteries).

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stations regularly announce the "5 and 6" and lottery winners, and once in a while there is a rather romantic story about the poor shoemaker or office boy who will be "settled for

According to Uslar Pietri, the oil-boom of the '70s fostered in Venezu-elans a taste for easy money, and changed people's mentality about traditional values such as hard work and resourcefulness.

"We came to believe that wealth was not dependent on time, dedica-tion, skills or hard work. That change of mentality brought about the idea that wealth was something produced by luck, by chance," he

Although Venezuela got an enormous wealth of petrodollars, critics say that about 80 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty, mostly in "rancherios" — shanty-towns on the hills surrounding ma-

Horses, lottery and "terminales" players come mainly from these slums, and many consider gambling the only way out of "downstairs" -

include the middle-class people who no longer can spend weekend holi-days in Miami or the nearby Dutch islands of Aruba and Curacao, or replace their American-make cars ev-

A Caracas psychiatrist, Jose Manuel Valls, says "The oil-boom created an artificial country, with artificial

values based upon money.
"Those who didn't have strong personal values got caught in the whirlwind, trapped in the money game, and now that things are diffi-cult buy lottery tickets to keep the il-

Lottery vendors regularly approach customers in restaurants and other public places. And some news-papers regularly publish a list of "chancy numbers for today," along with the more traditional horoscopes. Horse-race magazines are on sale in every newsstand in the country, some even using computermade forecasts.

Both lotteries and the "5 and 6"

are run by the government, and a share of the profits goes to welfare

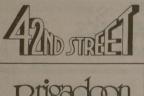
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