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Reform

Official recommends merging, closing colleges

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The chairman of the Mexican American Democrats of Texas recommended Wednesday that certain colleges be closed and others merged as part of higher education reform in the state.

Ruben Bonilla Jr., of Corpus Christi, said his recommendations reflect the "sentiment held by Mexican American Democrats that our state must begin the rigorous task of educating all its citizens if we are to continue to be among the nation's economic leaders.

"To do otherwise — to neglect again our Hispanic population is to promote mediocrity and to lend credence to the perception that Hispanics are our 'forgotten Texans,'" he said.

Bonilla's recommendations were made in a letter to Larry Temple of Austin, chairman of the new Select Committee on Higher Education.

Bonilla said he would ask MAD's executive committee to support the recommendations when it meets in Corpus Christi on Oct. 12. MAD has approximately 10,000 members, Bonilla said.

"I don't think there will be much disagreement," he said.

His recommendations include:

- Closing colleges "with extremely low enrollment," such as the Texas A&M University at Galveston or the University of Texas at Permian Basin in Odessa.
- "On the other hand," Bonilla said, if UT-Permian Basin "were to recruit actively the large number of Hispanic students to be found in areas of West Texas, its enrollment would increase dramatically."
- Combining or merging colleges "within the same city providing same or similar services, such as North Texas State University and Texas Woman's University" in Denton.
- Possibly closing or merging small colleges "within a very narrow geographical range of one another such as the Collin County Campus and the Richland Campus of Dallas County Community College."
- A short-term moratorium on opening any new colleges in Texas.
- Creating regional university systems.
- Developing a strategy for attracting minority students to colleges and stopping the "brain drain" of top Hispanic students to out-of-state schools.
- Developing programs to help the high dropout rate of minority students.
- Channeling more funds for research and development to colleges in South Texas.
- Obtaining more private money for student grants and scholarships.

Judge dismisses suits filed against Houston-based Continental Airlines

Associated Press

HOUSTON — A federal bankruptcy judge on Wednesday rejected allegations that striking Continental Airlines pilots and flight attendants were wrongfully discharged, and dismissed \$1.4 billion in claims against the carrier.

U.S. Bankruptcy Judge R. Glover Roberts granted Continental's motion for summary judgment on claims by the Air Line Pilots Association and the Union of Flight Attendants.

"This court rejects any suggestion that a strike may be equated with a constructive discharge," Roberts said in his decision.

"The fact that the pilots and flight attendants... were not discharged and did not resign but rather went on strike in and of itself precludes a finding of wrongful discharge," he said.

More than \$2 billion in claims against the Houston-based carrier have been rejected by the bankruptcy court within the last month.

Officials of the two unions were not immediately available for comment.

ALPA calculated its wrongful discharge claims at \$1.3 billion, adding the value of wages and benefits that the 924 striking pilots would have received if they had worked until retirement, Continental said in a release. Claims for each striking pilot was about \$1.4 million, Continental said.

Claims by the flight attendants' union averaged about \$100,000 for each of the 1,100 striking flight attendants, based on expected future compensation and value of intangible rights, the release said.

Members of ALPA walked out at Continental on Oct. 1, 1983, one week after the airline, then the eighth largest in the nation, sought protection from its creditors under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy law, slashed wages up to 50 percent and scaled down its operations.

Continental continued to operate with strikebreakers.

And ALPA last month temporarily suspended picketing in the walkout but insisted the strike was official continuing. The union also authorized striking pilots to bid for their old positions at Continental.

The carrier has posted vacancies for almost 400 positions that could become available next year, and more than 500 striking pilots have submitted requests to return to work, the airline said.

But Continental sued ALPA in Houston federal court, accusing the union of trying to disrupt flight schedules by encouraging striking pilots to apply for jobs they do not intend to accept.

The union is suing Continental, saying that ALPA continues as the Continental pilots' bargaining agent and that the company is violating the federal Railway Labor Act by attempting to withdraw recognition of the pilots' union.

Death row inmate says stay only temporary

Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE, — Convicted killer John Michael Lamb said Wednesday he was not surprised that he won a court order blocking his scheduled death early next week but expects he will get another execution date soon.

"It's obviously a very temporary stay," said Lamb, who faced death early Monday for the November 1982 shooting death of a Virginia businessman, Jerry Chafin, in a Greenville motel room.

"I expect I'll have another date in a couple of months. I can't see a district judge is going to rule in my favor," he said.

The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals postponed the execution because Lamb's attorneys have not been able to get in touch with the sentencing judge, E. Paul Banner of Greenville.

Banner is out of town and was not expected to return until the day of the execution — too late to rule on a motion filed on behalf of Lamb, according to attorney Carolyn Garcia of Houston.

The appeals court said the execution could not go ahead until the matter was resolved. Lamb's attorneys are complaining that he had ineffective counsel during his trial.

"I should have brought Perry Mason out of retirement to try my case," he joked.

Lamb said he was not aware of the stay until he was told of it by fellow inmates and reporters during regularly scheduled press interviews on Wednesday.

"I knew I was going to get one," he said.

Lamb insisted he was not afraid to die.

"But when the moment comes I'll be shaking like a chicken," he said. "After all, I'm human."

Lamb's stay left Anthony Charles Williams as the only inmate among the 210 on Death Row in Texas with an execution date.

Williams, convicted of sexual assault and capital murder in the bludgeoning death of a 13-year-old Houston girl, is slated to die Oct. 11. He has refused all recent requests for interviews.

Six prisoners have been executed in Texas so far this year.

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