

State and Local

Students can sign up to speak

Senate approves open forum

By FRANK SMITH
Staff Writer

The Student Senate Wednesday night passed a bill creating an open forum session to be included regularly on the biweekly Senate agenda.

The open forum session will allow students to sign up for speaking privileges with the presiding officer of the Senate before a meeting. Each student signing up would be granted five minutes to address the Senate.

The bill, sponsored by Speaker Pro Tempore Miles Bradshaw, originally called for the open forum to be conducted after the Senate had already dealt with both the old and

new business scheduled on its agenda.

"The reasoning behind that is that we were elected as senators and its our job to debate and decide and represent our constituents," Bradshaw said. "If we allow students to talk before we get to vote on a particular item of business, then they may influence our vote one way or another."

"I'm not saying that's necessarily bad, but I don't think it's their place to do that. I think that place lies in each of our positions."

But the bill was amended so that the open forum would come before the Senate conducted its business for

the night.

Jim Cleary, vice president of academic affairs, cited two reasons why he supported placing the open forum at the beginning rather than at the end of the meeting.

He said that having such discussion at the end of the meetings would be self-defeating.

"It (the bill) wants to increase student input, but what student is going to wait around . . . through these tedious meetings?" Cleary said.

Cleary also said he supports the idea of students coming before the Senate and trying to sway the vote because senators should know as much as possible about the various

stances on a bill before they vote.

The amended version of the bill passed.

The Senate also passed a bill allowing those students who are not a part of Student Government to propose legislation and follow it through its appropriate Senate committee. To begin such a process a student would be required to complete a form and return it to the Student Government secretary.

In addition, the Senate passed a bill calling for the reorganization of the Student Government book exchange program.

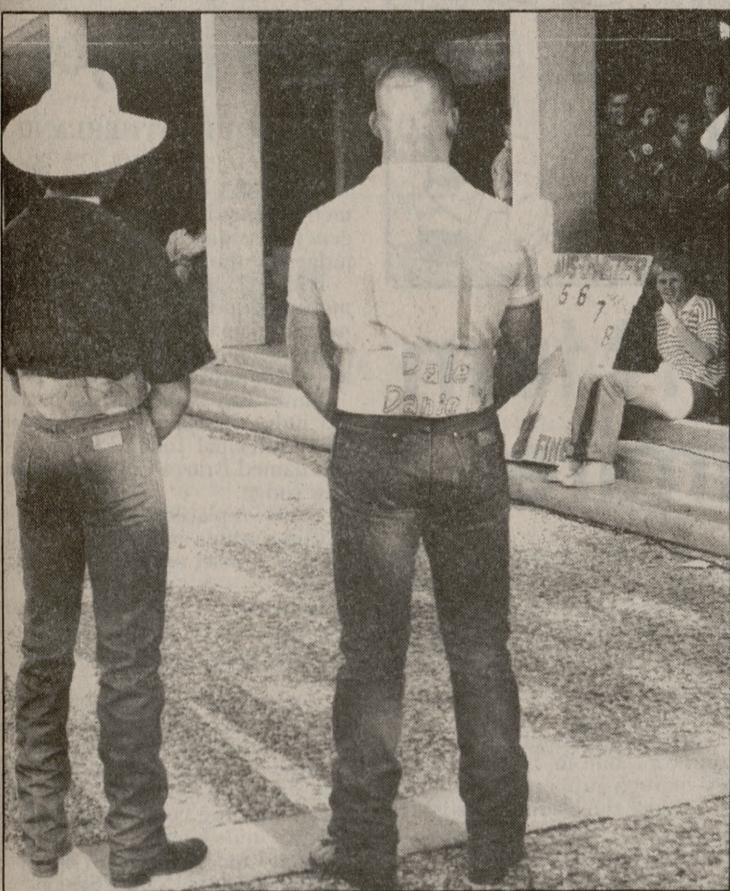


Photo by JOHN P. KARP

Two Tough Customers

John Barry (left) and Dale Daniels model their jeans in a Wrangler jeans contest near Rudder Fountain Wednesday. MSC Town Hall sponsored the contest to promote the George Strait concert. Barry, a junior accounting major from Houston, won the contest, receiving two tickets to the Nov. 14 concert. Daniels, a sophomore business major from Bowie, was runner-up.

Grand jury checking cave-in deaths

Associated Press

AUSTIN — A Travis County grand jury will hear evidence about three men killed in trench cave-ins at Austin construction sites.

Prosecutors in the county attorney's office are in the final stages of a five-week criminal investigation into two East Austin trench accidents that killed three construction workers, County Attorney Ken Oden said Tuesday.

"We've had several requests to look into the circumstances surrounding several recent construction deaths," Oden said.

"We have obtained relevant docu-

ments over the past weeks of the circumstances surrounding these construction site deaths and have conducted an investigation to see if there's a possibility of criminal liability for any of these deaths."

The grand jury will review the evidence to determine if it is sufficient to indict company officials, or their corporations, for criminally negligent homicide, authorities said.

The charge is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by a one-year jail sentence or a \$2,000 fine, or both. A corporation can be fined \$10,000 for each case of criminal negligent homicide.

Oden said the grand jurors will be

"We have . . . conducted an investigation to see if there's a possibility of criminal liability. . . ."

Ken Oden, Travis County Attorney.

steel trench box designed to protect them from cave-ins, but dirt from the sides of the 30-foot trench poured in the top of the box, suffocating both men, investigators said.

Oden said his office has taken statements from witnesses and has obtained construction documents from employees of the city.

The county attorney's office also has issued subpoenas for the records of inspections by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which investigated both accidents.

In the Govalle accident, which killed Maldonado, the federal safety agency levied \$8,080 in fines against Peabody Southwest Inc., a Houston-based firm that has several contracts to build improvements at city wastewater facilities.

Oden said the investigation has shown that accidents have occurred when shortcuts are taken with safety procedures.

"The way it looks to me is the greatest threat to workers is the incredible emphasis there is on getting the work done fast, because with everything we're talking about, there are ways of dealing with it or making it safer," Oden said. "It just takes time."

Official: Bill passage may cause water grab

Associated Press

AUSTIN — Texans' approval of the \$1.43 billion water package could lead to a water grab by local governments that have thirsted for help with local problems, a sponsor of the plan said Wednesday.

"If I were a political subdivision in need of a water project, I'd be getting in line as soon as possible," said state Sen. John Montford, D-Lubbock. "There are a lot of projects on the drawing boards that will now qualify for funding."

Final, unofficial vote totals released Wednesday by the secretary of state's office showed big wins for the two constitutional amendments that made up the plan.

Montford said the plan — worked out by lawmakers this year — succeeded because the Legislature worked hard to balance it. Previous efforts to work out a state water plan were killed by voters.

"It never got branded as a regional or provincial process," he said of the approved plan. "The problem

in the past has been a grandiose scheme and grandiose funding. In the '60s, the plan was to dig a ditch across Texas. In the early '80s, it was to dedicate half the state surplus to water projects."

Opponents of the plan said it could lead to open season for developers who make money by pushing major water projects. State Sen. Carlos Truan, D-Corpus Christi, called it "pork-barrel heaven for the water hustlers."

Edward "Ned" Fritz of Dallas,

who led a push against the plan, called Tuesday a day of infamy that Texans will regret.

"They will look back on it and say, 'That's where we began to lose the last of our natural resources,'" he said.

Fritz said state water officials now are free to approve unneeded water projects and expenditures.

"I predict the water developers will get enough state money to cover up hundreds of thousands of acres of valuable forests," Fritz said.

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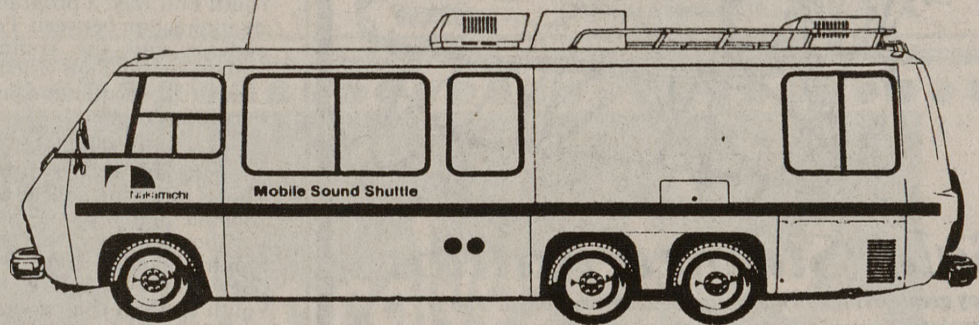
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