

# Battalion Classifieds

# Mattox seeks commission for study of criminal justice

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Mobile home 81' 14 X 60, 2 Bdrm, 1 Bath, mile from TAMU. 696-1968, 512-651-6683. 1304/22

By Jeanne Isenberg  
Staff Writer

Attorney General Jim Mattox announced Thursday that he will ask the Texas Legislature to create a special commission to study the Texas criminal justice system.

"In virtually every area in which we keep crime rate statistics, the statistics are up," Mattox said. "Something is very much missed within the criminal justice system."

He said the Texas Department of Public Safety released statistics last week showing an increase in every crime category. The overall crime rate increased 11.6 percent in 1985, he said.

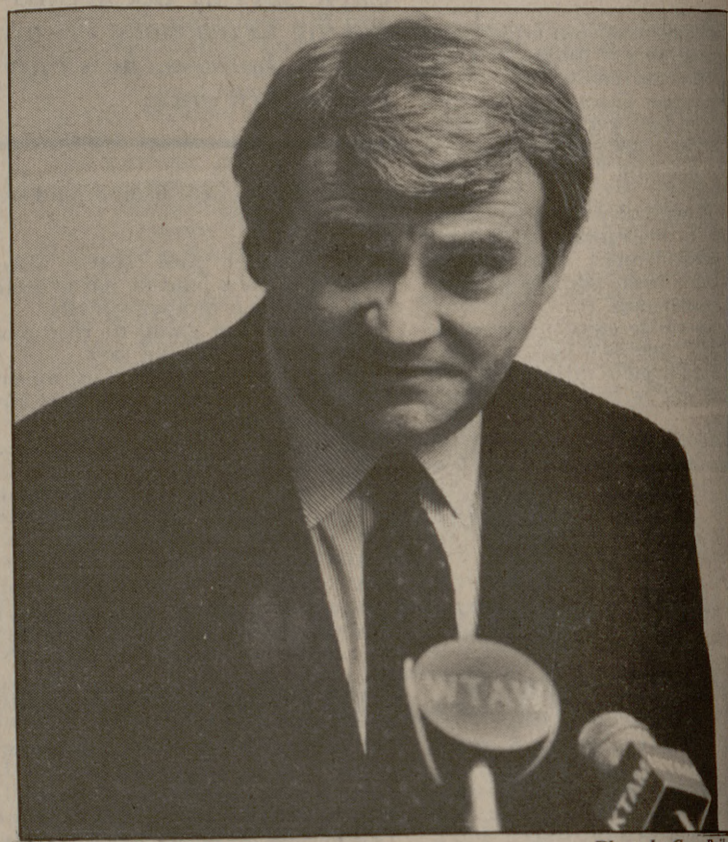


Photo by Greg Bahr

Attorney General Jim Mattox

Mattox said the problem is due in part to the fragmentation of the Texas criminal justice system.

The lack of coordination between statewide departments, such as the juvenile departments and the probation departments, weakens control over the system, he said.

He said this lack of coordination breaks what should be a united system into individual, autonomous groups.

Because the Legislature meets for such a short time, Mattox said, "quick fixes" usually are tried instead of taking time to evaluate the system in depth and find the root of the problem.

"What the Legislature has done in the past is try to tinker and fix the many, many fragmented parts of the system," he said. "We tinker, but we never make the fundamental changes necessary for a comprehensive improvement in the system."

Mattox also said prisons are not being built rapidly enough to house all the criminals. Some prisoners are getting out earlier than they should, he said, and often the wrong ones are left in the penitentiaries.

Society pays \$20,000 a year to house a criminal, and Mattox said there should be better ways to spend

money for the rehabilitation of non-violent offenders.

He said the blue ribbon commission he's suggesting should be created by the legislature and appointed by the legislative leadership, but private citizens should make up the body of the commission and a private citizen should chair it.

"I don't want to dictate the commission," he said. "If Attorney General Jim Mattox attempts to dictate, it'll be Jim Mattox's commission. I don't want that to happen. I want it to be a citizens' commission."

Mattox also said this sort of commission can't work without infusing on the "sacred ground" of state of the people within the system. It needs to be chaired by someone uninhibited by prior attachments to the system. The person needs freedom to make the major suggestions necessary to ensure the improvement of the system's efficiency, he said.

"The criminal justice system is broken," Mattox said. "And we better fix it."

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Monday, April 14  
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E.O.E  
M/F/H/V  
1324/14

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