

State and Local

Banking legislation gets preliminary OK in House



Photo by Anthony S. Casper

Congressman Claude Pepper, D-Fla., called for the preservation of funds for higher education and such senior citizen services as Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security before a group of senior

citizens at a press conference at Easterwood Airport. Pepper was campaigning for Pete Geren, a Fort Worth Democrat seeking to unseat U.S. Rep. Joe Barton of the 6th district.

AUSTIN (AP) — The House endorsed a bill Tuesday that would allow out-of-state banks to purchase Texas banks for the first time in the state's history.

Rejecting arguments that such action could leave decisions on Texas' future in the hands of outsiders, lawmakers gave the bill preliminary approval on a 116-24 vote.

Similar legislation has passed the Senate.

Rep. Bruce Gibson, D-Cleburne, the bill's sponsor, said the legislation is needed to bring in outside money that could help lift Texas out of its economic doldrums.

"I think it's one of the best things we could do to get this economy out of a recession," said Gibson, chairman of the House Committee on Financial Institutions.

Gibson said allowing out-of-state banks to purchase Texas bank holding companies and institutions would provide a needed shot of new capital.

"That means more loans," he said. "That means more jobs."

Opponents said the bill was being hurried through the special session without proper attention to the long-term consequences.

Rep. Al Price, D-Beaumont, said, "The people of Texas have consistently expressed a will that we should be on the guard against let-

ting the out-of-staters control our money and our destiny."

Rep. Pete Patterson, D-Brookston, said that allowing outside firms to enter Texas and take over banks would reward bankers who have been bad businessmen.

The bill, Patterson said, "is a very special-interest piece of legislation to bail out some people that have done a dad-gum poor job of handling their affairs."

Under current Texas law, banks and bank holding companies — firms which own several individual banks — that are based outside of Texas may not acquire banks within the state. Thirty-eight other states now allow some form of interstate banking, however.

The bill endorsed Tuesday would prohibit an out-of-state bank company from controlling more than 25 percent of the state's total deposits.

Out-of-state banks seeking to buy a Texas bank would be required to file an agreement with the state banking commissioner that a majority of the directors of the acquired bank would be Texas residents.

Backers said new sources of money are needed to help finance the state's economic diversification to offset hard times that have hit the oil, agriculture and real estate industries.

Supporters of the measure also said deregulation of banking nationwide has broken down old, geographic barriers in financial markets, so money market funds sold

nationally are attracting deposits that used to go to local banks.

Gibson said out-of-state banks coming into Texas would be looking for places to loan money rather than for deposits.

"We're the third largest market in this country," Gibson said. "Other banks want to be a part of that. They're going to come in here to make loans, not suck out deposits."

Opponents argued that once the traditional barriers were gone, there would be no way to protect the state in the future.

Rep. Bill Haley, D-Center, said, "We've been told the attitude of the Northeast — to hell with Texas."

Out-of-state bankers also wouldn't necessarily have the state's best interests at heart, and they might drain Texas banks to make loans elsewhere, opponents said.

Ruling says judge may preside over man's trial

HOUSTON (AP) — State District Judge Bob Burdette may preside over the trial of a man accused of soliciting a 1980 shooting on a Houston street that left a model crippled, even though he was a prosecutor at the time of the crime, another judge has ruled.

State District Judge C.V. Milburn made the ruling Monday.

The ruling followed a hearing in which attorneys for Robert Jess Anderson, 51, sought to have Burdette replaced as the judge for the trial.

Prosecutor Marie Munier argued that Burdette had no participation in the case.

Barbra Piotrowski, who now lives in Ohio under another name, was shot and wounded outside a Houston doughnut shop in the 1980 shooting.

Amderson is in the Harris County Jail facing three federal conspiracy indictments.

He also faces state charges accusing him of delivering marijuana and soliciting Piotrowski's capital killing.

The solicitation charge says he hired two California men to shoot Piotrowski.

The man he tried to hire did not carry out the plan and was not charged, prosecutors said.

Woman kills Austin mall security guard

AUSTIN (AP) — A woman being detained for shoplifting at a shopping mall Tuesday whipped her rented truck into at least six vehicles and running down and killing a security guard, police said.

A second guard at the southwest Austin mall and two other people were injured. The woman abandoned the U-Haul truck and limped away, police Sgt. Tony Lamme said.

He said two security guards caught the woman shoplifting at a J.C. Penney store in the mall. When they tried to detain her, he said, she ran into the parking lot, jumped into the truck and drove wildly through the 200-acre lot.

"She was just wild," Lamme said.

Senate cuts \$417 million from budget

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas senators passed an appropriations bill Tuesday cutting 1987 state spending by \$417 million and then challenged the House to make up the difference with a tax bill.

But the Senate measure was immediately rejected by the House, which originally proposed to cut 1987 spending by \$739 million, and compromise talks were requested.

A 10-member conference committee from the House and Senate

will try to write a final version before the end of the special session on Sept. 4.

Speaker Gib Lewis, who has opposed any tax bill, said there would be no tax bill in this special session "by any indicators I have seen."

Sen. Carl Parker, D-Port Arthur, said shortly before the Senate bill passed 28-0, "The House is trying to sell us on a Band-Aid that will get us past the voters in November. The

House knows its bill won't balance the budget and we know this bill won't balance the budget."

Sen. John Montford, D-Lubbock, said, "If we procrastinate until January, then we might have a tax bill by May. That will be too late."

Sen. John Traeger, D-Seguin, added, "If we don't deal with this crisis now, the treasurer tells me that state checks, and that includes our

checks, could start bouncing by December."

Sen. Carlos Truan, D-Corpus Christi, pointed out the House bill end the jobs of about 5,800 state employees while the Senate version would cut about 1,460 jobs.

One of the biggest differences in House and Senate cuts was in higher education. The House bill makes a 14.4 percent cut for state colleges and universities, while the Senate cut is about 7 percent.

State executes 3rd death row inmate in week

HUNTSVILLE (AP) — A convicted sex offender who abducted a woman, tried to rape her and then buried her alive on a beach became the third Texas inmate to be executed within a week when he was put to death early Tuesday.

Chester Lee Wicker, who would have turned 38 on Thursday, received lethal injection for the 1980

slaying of Suzanne C. Knuth, 22, of Beaumont.

Wicker, whose final-day appeals were rejected by the Supreme Court, made no final statement.

His only words, spoken just as the drugs started flowing through needles inserted into his arms, were: "I love you." They were directed to his lone personal witness in the death


chamber, Judith Lamblion, identified as a friend and spiritual adviser from Salt Lake City.

He took a couple of deep breaths before he became still. He was pronounced dead at 12:20 a.m., 10 minutes after the lethal injection began.

Mattox, who was present as Wicker was strapped to the death chamber gurney, told reporters that

the inmate said he was going to make the best of it.

Wicker's death followed the execution last Wednesday of Randy Woolls, convicted of killing a drive-in movie cashier, and Friday's execution of Larry Smith, who was put to death for killing a Dallas convenience store worker.



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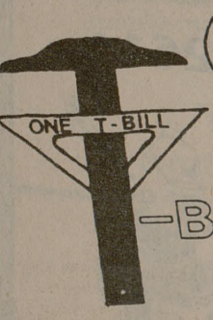
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