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On The Down Slide

Chanta Walker, 11, guides a friend, Krystal Cooks, 2, down the slide at Sadie Thomas Park while waiting for Gospelfest to begin Thursday night. The

performance was cancelled because of anticipated rain. Gospelfest was one of several festivities scheduled this week to celebrate Juneteenth.

Photo by Sarah B. Cowan

Clements reinforces Open Meetings Act

AUSTIN (AP) — Legislation designed to strengthen the Open Meetings Act was signed into law Thursday by Gov. Bill Clements, who said it would help make government more accountable to the public.

"The people have a right to know what goes on in state government," Clements said, noting that the bill will help guarantee that governmental bodies "discuss the public's business in public."

Clements said the legislation has benefits for both the public and governmental officials.

"This bill will force governmental bodies to think twice before going into closed sessions, while at the same time protecting them from frivolous lawsuits," he said.

Signing of the bill capped efforts begun in 1977 to close loopholes in the law.

Currently, the law allows governmental bodies to meet in private, "executive" sessions to discuss a variety of matters, including personnel

matters, litigation and property acquisition. The bill would require them to keep certified agendas or tape recordings of such closed meetings.

Under the bill, the tape or agendas could be made available to members of the public who challenge action by a governmental body, and any action taken by public officials who violate the law could be voided.

The bill also guarantees that television news crews can take their cameras into governmental meetings and videotape the sessions. The original act guaranteed that meetings could be covered by reporters taking written notes or using tape recorders or by still photographers.

Passage was sought by a variety of groups, including Texas Media, a coalition of seven state news media organizations interested in freedom of information issues.

"I'm delighted that the governor's done it," said Jeff Bruce, Texas Media chairman and managing editor

of the *Austin American-Statesman*.

"It will definitely result in better government and more open government," he said. "It will make government more open to the people."

Bruce noted that the effort to revise the open meetings law had been a lengthy one.

"A number of people over the years have worked very hard to write a bill acceptable to all parties involved," he said, praising the sponsors, Sen. Kent Caperton, D-Bryan, and Rep. Juan Hinojosa, D-McAllen.

Hinojosa said that too often in the past, the old law's guidelines had been used to close public sessions and limit information available to citizens.

"The inadequacies of the old act allow government to escape public scrutiny of and accountability for its actions," Hinojosa said. "Open government lets the people know what their public officials are doing with their taxes and their business."

Report shows security in U.S. airports lacking

WASHINGTON (AP) — Angry lawmakers, saying security at American airports leaves travelers vulnerable to weapon-toting hijackers, said Thursday they are ready to force the facilities to improve their detection systems.

Their wrath was fueled by a congressional report that disclosed that when Federal Aviation Administration inspectors tried to carry 2,419 mock guns and other weapons onto planes in late 1986, 496 — or 20 percent — were not detected at security checkpoints.

"It disturbs me no end to think that anytime somebody gets on that airplane, they're playing Russian roulette with their lives," said Rep. Cardiss Collins, D-Ill., chairman of the House government activities and transportation subcommittee, which held a hearing on airport security.

The tests were conducted at 28 major American airports and the report, based on FAA records, was prepared by the General Accounting

Office, Congress' investigative branch.

Collins and other legislators used the hearing to repeatedly call for government standards for airport screening systems.

Raymond A. Salazar, director of the FAA's Office of Civil Aviation Security, agreed that such performance standards were needed, but he said the agency needed three more months to study the X-ray and metal-detection systems.

"If you don't have minimum standards set in the next three months, I'll write legislation myself," Collins told him.

Salazar said that since screening began in 1973, security systems in the United States have detected 37,000 firearms, led to 16,000 arrests and prevented 117 hijackings.

Under prodding by Rep. Major Owens, D-N.Y., Salazar said the FAA believes none of the incidents involved organized, trained terrorists.

"We are jeopardizing and placing at high risk the riding public . . .," Owens said.

"If the system were really tested, we'd have a disaster, really, if we had well-organized conspirators," he said.

Salazar said that while the FAA is working to improve airport screening, the agency believes "an 80 percent (detection) rate is an effective deterrent."

"Terrorists and other criminals intent on hijacking or sabotaging an airliner are not going to try when the odds of being detected at the screening checkpoint are at least four out of five," he contended.

In its report, the GAO did not disclose which 28 airports it had tested, citing security reasons.

But during the hearings, Rep. Howard C. Nielson, R-Utah, said that the airport that detected 99 percent of the test weapons — the highest rate in the test — was at Anchorage, Alaska.

SMU donations dwindle more than \$4 million

DALLAS (AP) — Gifts to Southern Methodist University, plagued by a pay-for-athletes scandal, were down by more than \$4 million, school officials said.

But they attributed the 15 percent decline more to the sagging Texas economy than to the football recruiting scandal.

SMU officials predicted in May that the up-ramp over illicit payments to football players would cause donations to dwindle from last year's \$29.9 million to about \$26 million this year.

But the decline is greater than expected, with the university receiving less than \$26 million,

said Andrew D. Parker Jr., vice president for development and alumni relations.

Parker declined to release exact figures. He said the figures would be included in a report presented Friday to the SMU Board of Trustees.

He said he had not received any calls or letters from individuals who said they were withdrawing financial support because of the athletic scandal.

"The driving force is the economy," Parker said.

He also said that other colleges are experiencing similar declines.

Larry Landry, SMU's vice president of fi-

nance and administration, said, "We cannot measure any direct fallout from the football scandal. There must be some, but we cannot measure it. We haven't stopped any projects because of the decline in gifts."

"We'll have to tighten our belts, but that's what all of Dallas is doing."

"We don't have a major problem or crisis," Landry said he expects contributions to increase between 10 and 30 percent next year.

"People are rallying," Landry said. "I fully expect contributions to increase because we have all the ingredients to move forward."

"People are no longer lamenting problems but celebrating the new day."

Survey sees short supply of housing in future despite past over-building

By Carolyn Kelbly
Reporter

Students searching for cheap off-campus housing may find a dwindling supply in upcoming semesters, a local survey indicates.

An April survey by Branson Research Associates, Inc. shows a shift in the housing market in the Bryan-College Station area.

Seven thousand apartment units were surveyed, or 60 Bryan-College Station apartment complexes.

The survey looked into the availability of apartments in Bryan-College Station for students, staff or new residents. As of April, 11 percent of the apartments in the area were vacant.

In Bryan, 16 percent were unoccupied, and College Station showed a rate of 8 percent.

According to Branson's survey, 77 percent of the apartment occupants were Texas A&M students.

Norman Godwin, secretary trea-

surer of the Bryan-College Station Board of Realtors, said that the real estate market was booming from 1979 to 1982, he said. In 1982 the high vacancy in north Bryan was the

"A lot of bad decisions caused the over-built situation in Bryan-College Station. We've just over-built in the marketplace and the only solution is to sweat it out."

— Richard Smith, realtor

1986 no new units were begun, Godwin said.

Richard Smith, president of Coldwell Banker Richard Smith, Realtors, said that the problem with real estate today is an old one: the law of supply and demand.

The construction of duplexes, four-plexes and apartments was not due to a need for more area housing, but for favorable tax benefits for developers at the time, Smith said.

Before the Tax Reform Act of 1986, long-term capital gains — net appreciation on an asset owned longer than one year — was taxed at half the rate of ordinary income, Smith said. Ordinary income is wages, dividends, rents and interest earned throughout the year, he said.

The Tax Reform Act redefined long term capital gains as ordinary income, Smith said.

"A lot of bad decisions caused the over-built situation in Bryan-College Station," he said. "We've just over-built in the marketplace and the only

solution is to sweat it out. This is not a permanent problem, it's a cycle. The demand is growing right now but supply is stagnant. Bryan-College Station is a renter's market right now."

Branson's survey reports there is likely to be a student enrollment increase of 2,000 for the fall semester at Texas A&M. And the remodeling plans for some dormitories on campus this fall will likely cause a further decline in availability of apartments.

According to the survey, the local rental housing market is moving away from a renter's market toward normal rental rates, investment opportunities and operating costs.

Updates at the Texas A&M Off-Campus Housing office show the average cost to lease an unfurnished apartment ranges from an efficiency at \$233 to a three-bedroom apartment at \$485. The furnished units are slightly higher, ranging from an efficiency at \$280 to a three-bedroom apartment at \$524.

Democrats agree on tentative plan for 1988 budget

WASHINGTON (AP) — House and Senate Democrats reached tentative agreement Wednesday on their \$1 trillion budget for fiscal 1988, House Speaker Jim Wright said.

"I think we've got an agreement," Wright, D-Texas, told reporters following the latest in a series of meetings with Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., and other congressional leaders.

House Majority Leader Thomas S. Foley, D-Wash., said he was "very optimistic" and that only some minor matters remained.

"The details are being, as they say, massaged," he said.

The House and Senate each approved spending plans with similar themes — a tax increase to reduce the deficit, restraints on military spending and rejection of the deep domestic spending cuts President Reagan requested.

However, final passage of a compromise fiscal blueprint has been delayed for weeks because liberals and conservatives in the Democratic Party disagreed on the precise level of defense spending.

Wright, Foley and the other lawmakers declined to say what the exact Pentagon spending figure was in the agreement.

The latest House position had been about \$295 billion, while the Senate favored about \$300 billion — with part of the money

withheld unless Reagan agreed to the tax increase.

President Reagan had sought a budget with \$312 billion for defense in the fiscal year starting Oct. 1.

The Democrats' plan would not meet the mandate of the Gramm-Rudman budget-balancing law, because it would not reduce the deficit to \$108 billion in fiscal 1988.

Even with deficit reductions, through taxes and spending cuts, in the neighborhood of \$36 billion, the budget would leave more than \$130 billion in red ink.

Reagan said he met the target with the budget he submitted, but administration officials conceded recently that their own estimates put his deficit at \$27 billion over the limit.

Rep. Tony Coelho, D-Calif., the House majority whip, said final congressional approval of the plan could come early next week.

A House-Senate conference committee on the budget must first approve the detailed plan.

The budget is a congressional resolution that does not require the president's signature.

However, it serves as a guide for spending and tax bills that are sent to the White House.

Reagan has repeatedly said he would veto a tax increase, and Democratic leaders have said they would not be able to muster enough votes to override.