State and Local

Bullock certifies hike in tax will balance state budget

ified Wednesday that the largest tax increase in any state's history will balance the \$38.3 billion 1988-89 budget that lawmakers passed just before their special ession expired.

Bullock put his signature on the certification about 12 hours after Gov. Bill Clements, who ran last year on a no-new-taxes promise, signed into law what an expert

said is the largest tax package in any state's history.
"I reluctantly signed them," Clements said. "I certainly am not happy about them. They are higher than I would have liked. They're higher than other people,

other leaders in the Legislature, would have liked. But I also want to quickly add that we did what we had to do."
An economist for the National Conference of State Legislatures said the S5.7 billion Texas tax hike is a na-

"In a nutshell, you can say in absolute dollars, if you lon't take inflation into account and if you don't take the size of the state into account, it is the biggest," Steve Gold of Denver said.

The budget battle, ignited in February 1986 when Bullock predicted a growing state deficit as a result of falling oil prices, ended Tuesday night after a hotly partisan battle in the Texas House. It took a complicated series of procedural maneuvers to get the plan ap-

Rep. Dan Morales, D-San Antonio and tax-bill sponsor, said, "I am persuaded that the citizens of our state will be more than happy to pay an increased three-quar-

AUSTIN (AP) — State Comptroller Bob Bullock ceried Wednesday that the largest tax increase in any are shistory will balance the \$38.3 billion 1988-89 ters of a cent on the sales tax. And I'm persuaded that the professionals will pay an increased \$110 for their fees with a smile on their face. I don't think we overburdened any particular section of the economy.

The comptroller's staff Wednesday prepared charts showing that even with the tax increase, Texans face a

tax burden that is far below the national average The increase means Texans' annual tax load will be \$53.76 per \$1,000 in personal income. That is an increase of \$3.36 per year. The national average is \$74.11

Calculated on a per-person basis, Texans will pay \$730 a year in state taxes, up from \$667 in 1986 and below the national average of \$973.

Clements said it adds up to relatively little.
"I think the people of Texas will understand that we had to balance the budget and that we have stopped the growth of government," said the Republican governor who had vowed to veto any tax increase above the \$2.9 billion that would have been raised by keeping the sales tax at 51/1 percent and the fuels tax at 15 cents per gal-

As of Oct. 1, Texans will pay a 6 percent state sales ax. The current $5\frac{1}{4}$ rate had been scheduled to roll back to 41/8 percent on Sept. 1. Many Texans also pay 2 percent in city and mass transit sales taxes.

Under the tax bill, the increased sales tax also will be collected on 17 services that had been exempt, such as garbage collection, janitorial services and exterminating.

TDC guards question labor heads about risks of contracting AIDS

HUNTSVILLE (AP) — Prison employees are swamping labor union representatives with questions about inmates exposing them to

AIDS, a union spokesman said. Three Texas Department of Corrections workers were spattered with AIDS-contaminated blood while inervening in an attempted suicide, and a fourth guard was spattered with urine by the prisoner in a separate incident, officials said.

They are upset about the whole thing, and they feel the TDC doesn't care about them," Texas State Em-ployees Union spokesman Jerry Taylor said. "And they're right."

The union is calling for AIDS screening of all inmates entering the TDC. Such testing, however, has been criticized as too costly and inef-

fective by prison medical personnel.

Taylor also objected to placing in the general population those inmates who tested positive for the AIDS virus, even though they may not have AIDS itself.

Dr. Michael Warren, interim

medical director of the prison system, said, "Those that come in contact with the disease should be concerned. It's a disease for which

there is no cure."

But Warren questioned the recent

rise in apprehension among prison workers afraid of catching acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

No one needs to be scared and

the one thing we have to avoid is panic," he said Tuesday.
Since 1984, when the prison system started to track AIDS cases, 16 men and one woman have died of the disease. The most recent death occurred on Sunday. In the past three years, prison doctors have tested 1,050 inmates for AIDS, TDC spokesman David Nunnelee said.

Of those, 166 inmates tested positive for AIDS or the AIDS-related

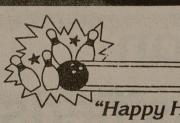


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