

State and Local

Reagan checks superintendent from Dallas for education post

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Reagan will nominate Dallas schools Superintendent Linus Wright to the No. 2 post in the U.S. Department of Education, administration sources said Tuesday.

The sources, who insisted on anonymity, said Reagan will formally nominate Wright as undersecretary of education upon completion of security checks and routine paperwork. The post, vacant since Gary Bauer moved to a White House policy slot in the spring, requires Senate confirmation.

Wright, 60, is one of the best known and highest paid school superintendents in America. In nine years at the helm of the 135,000-student system, he has earned a reputation as an adroit manager and academic innovator.

Wright, in a telephone interview, did not confirm that Reagan had chosen him for the job, but acknowledged, "I know I've had discussions and I'm under consideration."

Wright, who makes \$104,000 a year, would take a pay cut to \$82,500 as undersecretary.

Reagan had planned to nominate Harvard economics professor Glenn Loury for the job, but Loury withdrew his name from consideration in June for personal reasons.

Wright has opposed administration proposals for tuition tax credits

Wright described as being fair, capable administrator

DALLAS (AP) — Educators and colleagues Tuesday described Linus Wright, leading candidate for the second-ranking position at the U.S. Department of Education, as a fair and capable administrator with the tenacity of a bull.

Wright, superintendent of the 132,388-student Dallas Independent School District, will be formally nominated as undersecretary of education by President Reagan when security checks are completed, administration sources said Tuesday.

Mary Hepp, a spokeswoman for the Classroom Teachers of Dallas, said the group has had several clashes with Wright during his nine-

year tenure, but that he has always been fair. "There have been times that he has advocated proposals that we felt would dilute the strength of our organization," Hepp said. "But, I think ... from our perspective he has dealt with us fairly."

Wilton Crocker, executive vice-president of the Dallas Federation of Teachers, criticized Wright for the district's high administrative cost per student and said the superintendent does not recognize his group's view that teachers are the backbone of education.

"Under his tenure, the district has been overadministered and under-led," Crocker said.

and vouchers for private schools. He has, however, pushed magnet schools to give parents more choices within public education. He also has championed efforts to narrow the gap between the performance of white students and that of blacks and Hispanics on standardized tests.

The Dallas public school system is one of the nation's 10 largest. As in nearly all major U.S. cities, most students belong to ethnic minorities, with about half black and 30 percent Hispanic.

Dallas students' scores on standardized tests have been rising and the ethnic gaps closing.

Asked what his dealings with Secretary of Education William J. Bennett have been, Wright replied, "I haven't had any."

But Wright, who said he is a registered Republican, said Bennett has "established a philosophy for education that is good for the country, that we need to return to the basics, that we need to return the three C's to education ... content, character and choice."

"I feel public education is going to have to improve in this country," he said. "We're going to have to improve the literacy rate in order to be competitive."

The Reagan administration has lobbied unsuccessfully for tax breaks for parents who choose private schools, and vouchers that parents of disadvantaged children could spend at public or private schools.

Wright said: "I have, as a public educator, opposed vouchers, but I have supported choice and provide that choice within our school district. ... I don't think that private schools are something that the federal government ought to take responsibility for."

Wright had planned to retire this spring after his 60th birthday, but the Dallas school board asked him to stay for the 1987-88 school year. It is already searching for his successor.

Shrimpers find body of lost child

PORT O'CONNOR (AP) — Shrimpers in Matagorda Bay on Tuesday found the body of a 2-year-old boy who died in a boating accident that also took the life of his 1-year-old sister, officials said.

The boy's body was floating in the bay near Indianola when shrimpers spotted it Tuesday morning, said Donna Kearns, a dispatcher with the Calhoun County Sheriff's Department.

After their 40-foot shrimp boat sank Saturday afternoon, his family of seven used the roof of the boat's cabin as a makeshift raft, Kearns said.

Jury indicts company owner for death of trench worker

AUSTIN (AP) — The owner of a company that has paid fines for safety violations at its construction sites has been indicted in connection with the death of a worker killed in a trench collapse.

The Travis County grand jury Monday charged Joe Bland, owner of Bland Construction Co., with criminally negligent homicide in the April 21 death of Victor Nazario.

Gregorio Reza and Isidro Flores, supervisors for Bland, also were indicted on that charge.

The indictments were the third action taken this year by County Attorney Ken Oden's office against Travis County construction companies whose workers have died in trench collapses.

Federal regulations require construction companies to provide shoring or to slope the sides of trenches more than 5 feet deep, and to provide ladders in trenches so workers can escape a collapse.

Nazario, 46, was killed at a Bland construction site in North Austin. He was buried under about 12 feet of dirt and rock, where waste-water lines were being installed for a private developer.

An attorney for Bland did not return phone calls.

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration has cited the company for violating federal safety standards four times in the past year, including Nazario's death.

OSHA fined the company \$1,260 in Nazario's death, and cited it for

failing to protect workers with shoring or other supports. Bland has appealed that finding.

Since May 1986, the company has paid \$3,850 in fines for safety violations at three other Austin construction sites. Nazario's death was the first injury related to the violations.

Last month Oden won a \$20,000 judgment against Peabody Southwest, a Houston construction company whose representatives pleaded guilty to criminally negligent homicide in the 1985 cave-in death of an Austin worker.

On Feb. 16, Sabine Consolidated Inc. and its president, Joseph Tantilio, each pleaded no contest to a single charge of criminally negligent homicide in the cave-in death of a worker in 1985.

North's pro-Contra slides shown at university

WICHITA FALLS (AP) — Amid frequent bursts of applause and some jeers, U.S. Rep. Beau Boulter presented Lt. Col. Oliver North's controversial pro-Contra slide show to an overflow audience at Midwestern State University.

Boulter, an Amarillo Republican and staunch supporter of the Contras, narrated the show Monday night with what he said was the script North used in his testimony before a congressional committee investigating the Iran-Contra arms deal.

North could not show the actual slides because of technical restrictions, but did give an impromptu presentation based on the slides during the televised Iran-contra hearings.

"(Col. North) wanted to show the slides to the committee, but he was not permitted to do so," Boulter said.

"If these slides had been damaging to the president ... damaging to the Contras or damaging to the president's policies, they would have found a way to show them," he said.

Boulter was accompanied at the presentation by a State Department official, Jim Lewis, who answered questions about the Contras.

Much of the presentation centered on aerial photographs of alleged communist military bases in Central America, mostly in Nicaragua. Nearly a dozen slides offered mug shots of Sandinista leaders superimposed over selected quotes espousing communist philosophy.

Boulter read North's plea not to abandon his cause as the presentation ended with a slide of a wooden cross marking what was said to be the grave of a Nicaraguan Contra.

Toward the end of the show, Boulter's narrative moved to the subject of alleged human rights violations committed by both the Contras and the Sandinistas.

Lewis told the audience that the human rights record of the Contras was at least five times better than that of the Sandinistas.

At least one member of the audience disagreed with Boulter, saying the situation in Nicaragua is far too complicated to be reduced to an us-or-them situation.



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