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Survey: Texas should provide more jobs in '88

HOUSTON (AP) — The number of jobs available in Texas and around the Houston area should increase this year, a survey by Southern Methodist University says.

"In contrast to the early 1980s — when the Houston economy began

"In contrast to the early 1980s — when the Houston economy began its decline — international and national economic forces once again are working to the area's advantage"

— Harold Gross
SMU economist

its decline — international and national economic forces once again are working to the area's advantage," economist Harold Gross says in the latest forecast from the Center for Enterprising at SMU's Edwin L. Cox School of Business.

For the state, Gross sees a continuation of the slow, steady growth that's been under way for the past six months.

He cautions, however, that a national recession or plunge in oil prices could wipe out his forecast.

"Should the nation's growth rate drop precipitously, the pace of economic recovery in Texas will be slowed," Gross says.

The refining and petrochemical sector remains the core of Houston's industrial base despite capacity reductions and layoffs during the early 1980s, he said.

This sector is returning to strength because prices for refined products are rising and the utilization rate for refinery capacity is growing.

Job growth should begin its long-awaited recovery largely because of improvement in the refining and petrochemical sector, he said.

Houston's operable refining capacity utilization rate is pushing a healthy 85 percent, and refiners and petrochemical producers are a stable, though very modest, source of employment growth.

But the economist said construction employment in Houston will continue to decline because of the glut of commercial and residential real estate.

For some of the other major areas of the state, Gross has different economic predictions.

Dallas-Fort Worth should see a return to steady economic growth and should recoup the jobs lost in 1986-87, barring a national recession.

The area has one of the healthiest industrial economies in the Southwest and has emerged as the region's major manufacturing and services center, the SMU survey said.

San Antonio, which is dependent on jobs in government and relatively low-wage tourism-related services and trade industries, should see a decline in wage and salary job growth.

San Antonio, like other Texas cities, is plagued by a glut of real estate that has eliminated thousands of jobs in construction.

Austin's economy has become more dependent on government jobs and trade and services industries because of rapid population growth and an absence of significant manufacturing growth.

Wage and salary employment will continue to depend on the growth of government, trade and services industries and the city's only significant job losses will occur in construction, according to the forecast.

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Committee studies Alzheimer's illness to solve problems

AUSTIN (AP) — A new state committee on Monday began looking at ways to combat problems associated with Alzheimer's disease, an incurable illness that has struck as many as 160,000 older Texans.

The number of people with the illness, the most prevalent cause of dementia among older people, is expected to grow as the state's population ages, Health Commissioner Robert Bernstein told the first meeting of the Texas Council on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders.

One study shows that 44 percent of nursing home patients have been diagnosed as having Alzheimer's, Bernstein said. The number of Texans over age 65 is expected to grow from the current 1.5 million to more than 2 million in 10 years.

The council was created by the Legislature last year to recommend ways to help Alzheimer's disease vic-

tims and their care-givers and to coordinate existing services.

A primary concern is the cost of caring for those with the disease, Bernstein and others said.

Some studies say the annual nationwide cost of caring for Alzheimer's patients is \$30 billion, more than the combined cost of caring for cancer and heart disease patients, Bernstein said.

"The cost to an individual family to care for one stricken member can range from \$50,000 to a quarter of a million dollars, and that would depend upon the victim's age at the onset of the disease," he said.

"When family resources are depleted, the burden of these costs falls on the public," he said.

Existing programs, including Medicare and Medicaid, are not equipped to pay for care needed by those afflicted with the disease, officials said.

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