

Officials claim Sematech helps U.S.'s defense

AUSTIN (AP) — Politicians and scientists said Tuesday that Sematech, a high-tech research facility, will help preserve the national defense by restoring the country to dominance in the semiconductor industry.

More than 1,000 people attended the dedication ceremony of Sematech's new facility. It includes a \$75 million "clean room" designed to produce computer chips smaller and more complex than any ever produced before.

U.S. Rep. J.J. "Jake" Pickle, D-Austin, said Sematech represented a "happy marriage" between private industry and the federal government.

"We pursued the maiden Sematech," he said. "We wooed her, we chased her, we caught her, we fell in love with Sematech, and then we married Sematech. It is a happy marriage and it's going to last a long time."

Sematech is a consortium of 14 semiconductor producers that will conduct research on semiconductors. Semiconductors are vital components to most electronic systems. The consortium members will share technologies and manufacturing processes with each other.

The operation is funded jointly by the member companies and the federal government.

Federal spending is expected to be \$100 million per year for the next five years.

Robert Noyce, president and chief executive officer, said the venture will help the nation gain ground in the semiconductor market. Japan's semiconductor industry has overtaken the United States in worldwide market share, capital expenditures and spending on research and development, according to Sematech officials.

"Our economic strength is lessening as other nations have developed policies that utilize science and technology more effectively than we," he said.

Robert Costello, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, said the future of the nation's semiconductor industry is linked to national defense.

"The people that are knowledgeable about where we are in the defense business realize that a strong

industrial base is paramount, and the electronics industry is the forerunner," he said.

In the United States, the electronics industry accounts for \$230 billion in annual sales and 2.5 million jobs, according to Sematech.

The Sematech facility in southeast Austin was converted from a warehouse measuring 132,000 square feet. Within the structure is a "clean room," in which the air has been super-cleaned to enable researchers to manufacture delicate semiconductors.

Suggestions promote paying child support

AUSTIN (AP) — Parents delinquent in paying child support would be unable to buy license plates or renew their driver's license under recommendations informally approved by a joint legislative committee.

Other recommendations in the final report of the House-Senate Committee on Child Support include:

- Notifying credit bureaus of parents who are two months delinquent on their child support payments.

- Allowing judges to appoint agencies or individuals to monitor child support and visitation orders.

Two controversial recommendations — a law making grandparents responsible for the offspring of their minor-aged children, and a measure requiring payments toward college education — were dropped from the final report.

Due to a lack of a quorum — only 7 of the 16 committee members attended Monday's meeting — the panel reached an informal consensus on the report that will be passed to the Legislature when it convenes in January.

Committee members also recommended setting up a telephone hot line for parents to check on the status of their case and establishing a group of trouble-shooters to help reduce the backlog of cases.

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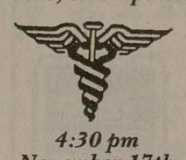
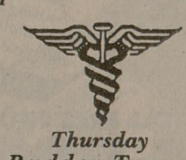
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Analyst: MCorp could be thrown into bankruptcy

DALLAS (AP) — A banking analyst says MCorp's upcoming meeting with bondholders could be more significant than the holding company's reported recent borrowing of hundreds of millions of dollars from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

"That particular group of bondholders, if they choose to do so, could throw the company into bankruptcy," Frank Anderson, of Stephens Inc. in Little Rock, Ark, said. "I would think the most immediate concern is for MCorp to either reach an agreement with these bondholders to prevent the bankruptcy or possibly even make an interest payment."

The meeting is expected to be sometime this week, Stephens said, because MCorp's 30-day grace period for declaring a moratorium on \$470 million in outstanding debt ends Monday, when creditors can demand payment.

The Dallas Morning News, quoting banking industry sources, reported in Tuesday's editions that MCorp accounted for the lion's share of the new borrowings in the latest reported figures. The sources said that would indicate large depositors have made withdrawals.

But Stephens downplayed MCorp's borrowing at the Fed Reserve's discount window.

"There have been some liquidity pressures on the holding company as a result of some of the threats of bankruptcy," Stephens said. "And to this point, I don't get the feeling that the borrowings from the Fed — which I guess were somewhere less than \$1 billion — have not become a major stumbling block to them, as they have adequate collateral with the Fed to back up these borrowings."

MCorp spokesman George McCane said Monday that the Dallas-based banking firm would release no information about its deposit flows.

Figures released by the Federal Reserve Bank show borrowings from the discount window of the Dallas Fed rose nearly \$1.2 billion in the two weeks ending Nov. 9, following a two-month declining trend.

The Fed does not identify banks and institutions that have received the loans.

Much of the \$2.8 billion in last week's outstanding loans would still be attributed to NCNB Texas, which

inherited Fed loans in July when it took over Texas institutions of First RepublicBank Corp., analysts said.

MCorp chairman Gene H. Bishop has sought to combine FDIC aid with new private capital to preserve the last of the big Texas-controlled banking firms.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. agreed earlier this month to consider Bishop's plan. The announcement came after a near showdown over disposition of about \$250 million in liquid assets held by MCorp at the parent level.

Overcrowding forces transfers to state prisons

HOUSTON (AP) — Harris County has been ordered to ship 290 jail inmates to state prisons each week, even though the Corrections Department already imposed a quota system that limits the county to 180 weekly transfers.

U.S. District Judge James DeAnda ordered Sheriff Johnny Klevenhagen to start sending more prisoners to the Texas Department of Corrections beginning Dec. 5. The order was part of a 16-year-old lawsuit concerning county jail conditions.

But the TDC has a quota system for county jails that was implemented in response to U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice's order to ease crowding in the prison system.

DeAnda, who called the county jail "dangerously overcrowded," directed Klevenhagen to release 250 men and 40 women prisoners a week, or as many as are eligible up to that number, to the state. He did not order TDC to accept the convicts, and didn't say what would happen if they refused to do so.

The county jail is overcrowded because it can only send 180 inmates to the TDC each week, no matter how many might be eligible to go. Other county jail populations across the state also have swelled as a result of the TDC policy.

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