

State/Local

Legislature gears up for week 2

AUSTIN (AP) — The Legislature enters its second week of business in high gear Monday, with House committees ready to receive bills weeks earlier than usual and a special panel working to resolve a state representative's election challenge.

House Speaker Gib Lewis, in a move he said broke a 30-year record, appointed House committees Wednesday, the second day of the regular legislative session. Usually, such appointments aren't made for two to three weeks in the House.

The Fort Worth Democrat also appointed a bipartisan panel to re-

view the election contest in the District 129 race. Democrat Ed Watson of Deer Park is challenging Nov. 8 election results that caused him to lose his House seat after 16 years.

Recount results showed Watson losing by seven votes to Republican Mike Jackson of La Porte — 13,009 to 13,002.

Hopes are that the issue can be resolved within 10 to 15 days, Lewis said. "It's not a cut-and-dried issue, he said."

Watson said there were discrepancies in vote-counting, and he should have won. He said he's heard

"through the grapevine" that a new election likely will be called.

But Jackson, who was seated with other members last week, said, "I'm sure the facts will show I've won the race fair and square."

Lewis said he thinks it's likely the House will divide along party lines over the issue. He said he doesn't think that's right, but he added, "I think it's just the way the system works."

Rep. Patricia Hill, R-Dallas, who is vice-chairman of the special committee, noted that Democrats outnumber Republicans in the 150-member House — 93 to 57. But she said the matter shouldn't be decided by party affiliation.

"I think the committee, and I hope the House, will really decide this on the facts as they see them," Hill said.

The special committee will make recommendations to the House, which can allow Jackson to retain the seat, replace him with Watson, or call for a special election.

Also scheduled to meet this week is a streamlined House Appropriations Committee, which has been reduced from 29 to 23 members under new House rules.

"It's the old saying, 'You can have too many cooks in the kitchen,' and that's exactly what has happened with the appropriations committee," Lewis said.

The House also is getting a head-start on 1991 redistricting, with creation of a committee with jurisdiction over preparations for that process.

Ex-militants now work with system

Associated Press

Some of the state's militant Hispanics have given up the strident rhetoric of the 1960s and donned business suits to take places in the establishment they once denounced.

But these former firebrands say they still hold on to the ideals of the Raza Unida Party.

Jose Angel Gutierrez, one of the party's founders, graduated from the University of Houston law school in December and is spending much of his time studying for the Texas bar exam.

Two other former party supporters, Angel Noe Gonzalez and Jaime de la Isla, work as top administrators with the Houston school district and its affirmative action program.

All three said they evolved with society to achieve the basic principles of education and equal opportunity that the Raza Unida Party promoted as its platform.

But Gutierrez, director of the Texas Rural Legal Aid Foundation, still speaks on minority issues.

"We're still a nation in captivity," he said. "Minorities are used as a reserve labor pool and remain underdeveloped."

Gutierrez is a native of Crystal City, the predominantly Hispanic South Texas town that acted as a catalyst in 1969 for Hispanic consciousness-raising in the state when he helped organize a school boycott of

more than 1,700 Mexican-American students. Those involved in the boycott called for bilingual education and career and college counseling.

He went on to become school board president and then Zavala County judge in the 1970s, but political in-fighting among Raza Unida members and a Democratic Commissioners Court swept away Gutierrez's power base.

In 1980, he moved to Oregon and didn't return to Texas until 1986, when he became director of the legal foundation.

Angel Noe Gonzalez, now 59, worked with Gutierrez in Crystal City, where he was the school district superintendent from 1970 to 1974. Currently, he directs the Houston Independent School District's department of multilingual programs.

"In those four years (in Crystal City), I changed professionally and individually as an educator, an administrator and as a human being," Gonzalez said.

"We were able to incorporate what we did in Crystal City to have a tremendous impact on education and politics," he said. "Back then we had to fight the system, while now we use the system."

De la Isla came into contact with La Raza Unida members at the University of Houston and when he joined the Mexican American Youth Organization.

State employees work as Texans honor King

Associated Press

Thousands of Texans began celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday with parades and marches this weekend, but state agencies and some schools planned to remain open during the federal holiday Monday.

All federal and many city and county agencies will close Monday in honor of the slain civil rights leader. Most stores and businesses, as well as colleges, will remain open.

King's oldest son, Martin Luther King III, told a Dallas audience that students who must attend class Monday can remember his father in school.

The NAACP planned to demonstrate Monday against the Grand Prairie school district's decision not to close, officials said.

"We'll have signs, we'll have chants and we'll sing some songs just to continue to press this issue," said Lee Alcorn, president of the Grand Prairie chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

But King said he thought his father would challenge a "school system to be a better school system, not necessarily to close it." He did not

criticize districts that chose to remain open, but encouraged students to celebrate by "living a day in peace."

King on Saturday encouraged the overhaul of the city's public housing system and urged Dallas residents to move forward with the recommendations made last week by a mayoral commission that studied race relations for nearly a year.

Actress Cicely Tyson gave a reading of portions of King's speeches and other passages relating the black experience to a San Antonio audience of 400 on Saturday night. Tyson planned a similar appearance in Dallas Monday.

On Monday, the Black Heritage Society in Houston and the North Houston Frontier Club will sponsor a breakfast and parade. With Mayor Kathy Whitmire making a formal city declaration honoring King, the two organizations will also sponsor an afternoon tribute with entertainment and speeches at Hermann Park.

In San Antonio, about 20,000 people will march from four directions to the city's Martin Luther King Plaza Monday morning, organizer Jaime P. Martinez said.

Drug smuggler deals for leniency

HOUSTON (AP) — Information given to federal authorities by a convicted Colombian drug smuggler in exchange for a shorter prison term resulted in indictments against people who allegedly worked for him, rather than more important figures in the organization, a newspaper report said.

In a copyright story, the *Houston Chronicle* reported that Idinael Martinez told prosecutors shortly after his October 1984 arrest that he had information about higher-ups in the Colombian smuggling ring, and agreed to testify against them.

Martinez was arrested after smuggling more than 1,800 pounds of cocaine into the Houston area and faced up to 300 years in a federal prison.

Federal officials quickly struck a deal with Martinez that included a 10-year maximum prison sentence and putting Martinez and his family in the federal witness protection program.

The *Chronicle* said the federal government also has paid Martinez \$98,174 in the past three years, including \$4,000 in cash within the past several months.

Now federal prosecutors admit that Martinez headed the drug distribution ring in the United States and his cooperation has primarily resulted in the indictment of alleged underlings in his own organization.

Only one person who may have played a larger role than Martinez in the smuggling operation has been indicted. He is Pedro Ortegón, a reputed drug exporter who is hiding in his native Colombia.

"Martinez led the government to believe that he could help them catch the big fish," said Kent Schaffer, a defense attorney representing one of Martinez's alleged confederates. "Now they realize that he is the big fish."

As a result of Martinez's cooperation, federal authorities indicted 18 people in early 1987 for allegedly participating in the drug ring.

Eight of the defendants went

on trial Monday, but U.S. District Judge Kenneth M. Hoyt declared a mistrial Wednesday after a scheduling conflict left one of the defendants without an attorney.

Federal prosecutors refused to be interviewed about Martinez, the newspaper said.

But in opening statements at the trial, chief prosecutor John Lenoir described Martinez's operation to jurors as a "Horatio Alger" story, where a penniless Colombian national parlayed one kilo of cocaine into an illegal "Fortune 500" operation within several years.

He did that with the help of many people, Lenoir said, including seemingly legitimate businessmen who assisted him in acquiring airplanes and laundering the profits from his drug distribution network.

Federal authorities claim Martinez's drug ring was responsible for importing more than 5,000 pounds of cocaine between 1982 and his arrest at Houston Intercontinental Airport in 1984, with much of it smuggled into the Houston area.

Some questions have been raised about the money paid to Martinez, which included \$29,000 for housing, \$16,000 for medical expenses and \$39,000 in spending money given to his wife, according to information the newspaper obtained.

Two \$2,000 cash payments also were made to Martinez while he was a prisoner, including one that came just weeks before he was scheduled to take the witness stand against the eight individuals.

"Why does the government pay a guy in federal prison \$4,000 in cash except to remind him of his obligation to them," Schaffer said.

But prosecutors said the payments are legitimate expenses incurred as the result of placing the Martinez family in the witness protection program.

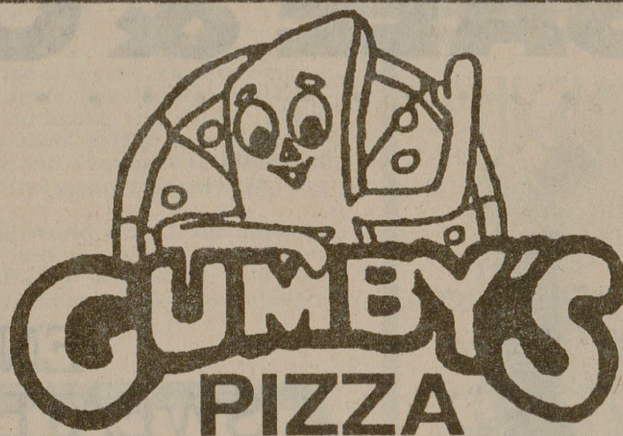
Martinez is expected to return to Houston to testify.

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