

Rep. Bryant announces run for attorney general

AUSTIN (AP) — Democratic U.S. Rep. John Bryant said Monday he will run for Texas attorney general in 1990 and made public his personal tax returns, challenging other candidates to follow suit.

"I have no conflicts of interest," Bryant said. "I am involved in no business deals. I am totally independent."

The Dallas congressman distributed copies of his federal tax returns for 1983 to 1988 and a personal financial statement showing assets of \$337,000 and debts of \$195,500. He said other candidates for attorney general should do the same.

"I am calling on each person who files for this very powerful office to release their income tax returns for the last five years . . . to erase any doubt that any client or business relationships could present a conflict of interest," Bryant, 42, said.

He said attorney general candidates, who must be lawyers, should also make public a list of their clients and those of their law firms in addition to all sources of income.

"Americans today feel a widespread distrust of public figures in general and government officials in particular," Bryant said. "Wall Street financiers, TV evangelists, university athletic programs and corporate officials all face a skeptical public."

"The public is particularly skeptical of our profession, and I believe each of us who aspires to be our state's chief law enforcement officer is obligated to re-

veal all the sources of our income, as well as our assets and debts," Bryant said.

Attorney General Jim Mattox is expected to run for governor in 1990, and several Republicans and Democrats are eyeing his job.

Besides Bryant, Democrat John Odam, a Houston lawyer and aide to former Gov. Mark White, has declared his candidacy for attorney general.

Others considering the office include state Rep. Dan Morales, D-San Antonio, and Republican Roy Barrera Jr., a former Bexar County district judge who ran for attorney general in 1986.

State Rep. Patricia Hill, R-Dallas, and Texas Railroad Commission Chairman Kent Hance also have expressed interest in the office.

Bryant, a Texas state representative for five terms beginning in 1974, has been elected to four terms in Congress.

A lawyer and Lake Jackson native, Bryant joined the U.S. House of Representatives in 1983 and serves on the committees for energy and commerce, the judiciary, the budget and veterans' affairs.

According to Bryant's tax forms, he earned \$110,496 in 1988, \$25,530 of which was "business income," mostly derived from speaking fees, he said.

Bryant said the amount was in line with the approved level of one-third of his congressional salary of \$86,283.

Corpus Christi lawyers get relief from the heat with Latin clothing

CORPUS CHRISTI (AP) — The city's balmy summer weather can turn a lawyer's freshly pressed, crisp shirt worn under a wool suit into a wrinkled, sweat-soaked mess.

Judge Robert Blackmon is offering relief.

Guayaberas — those locally popular Latin American-style short-sleeved shirts with all that pocket space — are now acceptable garb in Blackmon's 117th District Court.

"With the summer comes the heat. These guayaberas are loose and flowing. They are very comfortable," said Blackmon, who also says he likes the way they look. "They are worn all over the civilized world."

Guayaberas, often worn in locales such as Mexico, Puerto Rico and Cuba, are sometimes referred to as "Mexican wedding shirts."

No lawyers have yet dared to wear them in Blackmon's court this year, and none of his fellow judges has followed his lead. The jurists say, kiddingly, that only police officers, gringos and tourists fancy the shirts, while Blackmon defends them as fashionable and functional — an attractive camouflage for those with protruding pot bellies.

According to Blackmon's order, "Counsel appearing in this court may wear in lieu of coat and tie a one-color guayabera."

The order was effective May 1 and will last through the hot summer months, Blackmon said.

He stressed that the shirts should be "properly fitting," and he prohibits wide-open collars with gold chains on a chest.

The local rules regulating conduct in Nueces County courts state that "all male lawyers shall wear coats and ties while in attendance of the court, unless otherwise permitted by the court."

While there are no rules for female attorneys' clothing, Blackmon said they also are welcome to wear guayaberas.

The judge said he has issued the guayabera rule almost every year since he first took the bench in the country court-at-law No. 1 in 1979. He has served as a district judge since 1987.

Blackmon said he occasionally dons a long-sleeved black guayabera, given to him by Alice attorney Homero Canales, instead of his more bulky calf-length judicial robe.

"No formal attire looks better on a man than a proper-fitting guayabera," Blackmon, captain of the U.S. Navy reserves, said. "The military service goes to summer uniforms. Why not the courts?"

Because, his fellow judges say, it's cool indoors and the shirts present a less-than-lawyerly image.

Some examples:

Judge Joaquin Villarreal, 347th

District Court: "We've got good air conditioning in my courtroom. Nobody wears guayaberas anymore but the tourists and the gringos."

Judge Eric Brown, 28th District Court: "I basically think they're real unflattering shirts. Only cops wear them because it hides their guns."

Judge Margarito Garza, 148th District Court: "Not in my lifetime — not in my courtroom. The next thing somebody will want to do is come dressed in shorts or blue jeans. You're not coming to a beach party."

Judge Mike Westergren, 214th District Court: "I'm kind of old-fashioned in some ways."

Judge Jack Hunter, 94th District Court: "It would be nice to sit on the bench in shorts and T-shirts, but I'm not sure we can do that."

Blackmon said the likely reason why attorneys have not taken advantage of his rule yet this year is because most of them also have business in other courts.

Attorney Jorge Rangel, a former district judge and avid guayabera-

wearer, said he sports the shirts to the courthouse, but only when he is not scheduled to be in a courtroom.

"People say, 'You look like a barber.' And then they look at my hair," joked Rangel, alluding to his balding pate.

Civil-law attorney Larry Coffey, who works for the law firm of Redford, Wray & Woolsey, said he would not wear a guayabera anywhere.

"I don't look good in short-sleeved shirts," Coffey said. "My arms look like noodles."

Coffey said he also would be reluctant to wear anything but a coat and tie in front of his client.

"The client is paying for a certain image as well as an ability," he said.

But attorney Mark Woerner, who practices criminal-defense law and some civil law, likes Blackmon's rule.

"I'd wear something like that," Woerner said. "I'm a casual kind of guy. I'd wear shorts if they'd let me."

"I may even go home and get (a guayabera) and just visit the 117th," Woerner said.

Pine beetle 'emergency' threatens Texas' forests

AUSTIN (AP) — About 440 spots infested by Southern pine beetles in national forests in Texas have been found, the U.S. Forest Service said Monday.

The spots range from a single tree to groups of up to 100 trees, officials said.

"Their rate of activity is seven times that of last year," said National Forest Supervisor Mike Lannan in a statement issued by the service's Lufkin headquarters. "We hope it's not the beginning of an epidemic, but it sure doesn't look good."

Lannan said insect traps set by Texas Forest Service researchers on the Davy Crockett National Forest have confirmed the presence of a large number of beetles.

Lannan said extra employees are being hired to help control the outbreak.

"We view the infestation as an emergency and treat it as we would a wildfire," he said. "As the situation worsens on a district, we shift employees who normally work on other jobs to beetle control work."

If the situation requires it, he said Forest Service employees would be brought in from other states.

Lannan said Southern pine beetles typically are attracted to older pine trees. The insects burrow to the cambium layer between the

bark and wood, killing the trees by girdling them or infecting them with a fungus.

After a tree dies, new adult beetles move on to a nearby living tree.

Lannan said the Forest Service tries to prevent epidemics by cutting down bug-infested trees plus a buffer strip of about 80 feet around the advancing edge of each infested spot.

He said 53 spots had been treated, and the cuts have been averaging about an acre in size.

Officials said 227 of the Southern pine beetle spots are on the Davy Crockett Forest's Neches District east of Crockett. That includes 15 in the Big Slough Wilderness Area.

In other areas of East Texas, about 75 new beetle spots have been found in the Sam Houston National Forest north of Houston.

The Angelina National Forest east of Lufkin reports 66 new spots, including 17 in the Upland Wilderness Area. About 20 new spots have been found in the Sabine National Forest west of Toledo Bend Reservoir, and 50 new spots have been located in the Davy Crockett National Forest's Trinity District near Apple Springs.

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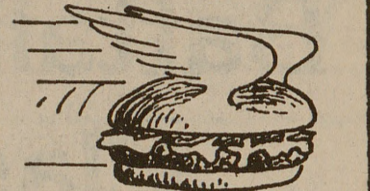
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