

Tuesday, June 20, 1989

Critics: Education bill's funding 'not nearly enough'

AUSTIN (AP) — The \$450 million school finance bill signed into law is not nearly enough to achieve equity among students in rich and poor districts...

even enough to keep up with the rate of evaporation. The Equity Center, which was formed to represent students in property-poor school districts, claims a pivotal role in the lawsuit...

differed on the question of whether the inadequate, inequitable system was also unconstitutional. Since 1985-86, he said, inflation and the expense of meeting changes required by the Legislature have increased educational costs...

He said it now seems clearer than ever before that our only hope for the foreseeable future lies in the Supreme Court. Jimmy Vasquez of the Edgewood school district, the San Antonio system that is the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit, said...

Kirkpatrick said a proposed 7-cent per package cigarette tax hike would have made available an additional \$450 million for public education, but Gov. Bill Clements threatened veto of any new tax...

End may be in sight for measles epidemic But officials say nation's worst outbreak not completely over yet

HOUSTON (AP) — The end may be in sight for the nation's worst measles outbreak, but health officials who have monitored the epidemic that resulted in nine deaths and 1,763 recorded cases since November say it hasn't disappeared yet.

"I hope this is the end. We've seen enough measles to last us for years."

— Wes Hodgson, Texas Dept. of Health epidemiologist

"I hope this is the end," said Wes Hodgson, epidemiologist for the Texas Department of Health. "We've seen enough measles to last us for years."

symptoms is usually 10 to 14 days, a measles outbreak is considered over when no new cases are reported for two weeks, Hodgson said.

the city but within Harris County.

Los Angeles has recorded the second-largest outbreak, with 1,410 cases since August 1987. The Texas Department of Health has recorded 3,135 cases statewide since November, Hodgson said.

Measles cases have been reported in 94 counties, with Lubbock County's 322 cases second to Harris. Hidalgo County has had 211 cases, and Dallas County has recorded 110.

The previous high case count for measles in this decade was 1981, when 851 cases were reported in Texas.

Dr. Keith Ramsey, assistant professor of internal medicine and microbiology at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, said the combination of inadequate vaccines dispensed before 1979 and an influx of unimmunized immigrants created "a time bomb waiting to go off."

"The problem with measles is that you need about 95 percent of the people immune to it to really stop it. ... it's so communicable," said Ramsey.

The federal Centers for Disease Control spent \$458,590 in 1988 to purchase the measles vaccine for the Houston health department. So far this year, the health department has spent \$844,590 on the vaccine.

Clements likely to widen special session agenda

AUSTIN (AP) — Three weeks after ending their 1989 regular session, the state's part-time lawmakers are headed back to the Capitol for a special session on workers' compensation reform that opens Tuesday afternoon.

The special session was called by Gov. Bill Clements even before the regular session ended on May 29.

The reason: legislators found themselves unable to agree on a workers' comp bill despite 18 months of study and 140 days of lawmaking.

The system for paying benefits for workers who suffer injuries or

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death on the job is under attack from all quarters.

Labor says it pays too little in benefits. Business says it costs too much. Gov. Clements says those high costs are driving new industry — and new jobs — away from Texas.

Clements sets the agenda for any special session by limiting the subjects which can be considered.

For this 30-day gathering, which convenes at 2 p.m., he says workers' comp is the first order of business.

"We're going to focus on that, first," Clements said in an inter-

view. "I think they can move expeditiously."

Typically, however, special session wheeling and dealing finds the agenda opened to a wide range of topics — and this one appears no different.

Lawmakers have been bombarding the governor with requests for agenda items. And Clements himself has suggested some possible topics.

When he vetoed the Texas Aeronautics Commission budget on Friday night, the governor renewed his call for a unified state Department of Transportation to take over that commission's duties and others.

Lawmakers will get another chance to create that department, he said in his budget proclamation, "after workers' compensation issues are addressed, (and) provided sufficient time is available."

A couple of other major topics look like good bets for inclusion on the special session agenda, sooner or later.

One of those is legislation to tighten campaign finance laws.

Imposing limits on how much money Texans can give political candidates, strengthening reporting requirements and other changes were a top priority of the outgoing secretary of state, Jack Rains, who resigned last week.

DART Vader fights proposed rail line

DALLAS (AP) — He has emerged as DART's most visible nemesis, and he's out to save the neighborhood. Clad in an imposing black mask and costume, the 44-year-old East Dallas resident approached the microphone in the near standing-room-only crowd at a public hearing.

"I'm DART Vader," he said. "I'm your worst nightmare."

Though he looks more like a character out of the movie "Star Wars," Don Heit is protesting a proposed transit line by the Dallas Area Rapid Transit authority. And while hundreds of area residents have joined the mass transit debate the past several years, Heit has emerged in just two months as one of DART's most vocal critics.

ment, aside from his work with the Boy Scouts and the Forest Hills Homeowners Association.

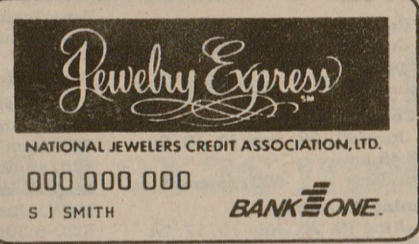
"I worked for 25 years to build a home and a life for my family," Heit said. "I shut my mouth and got along with my life. And here these bunch of yo-yos want to take it away on a whim. I got upset."

In early April, DART announced it was considering using the Santa Fe railway corridor, which runs behind Heit's house, as a light-rail link from downtown Dallas to nearby Garland. From Heit's perspective, DART might as well have declared war.

A former Vietnam combat photographer and now a free-lance photographer, Heit and his wife, Dee, chose their East Dallas neighborhood 18 years ago when they moved from Los Angeles "because it reminded us of Santa Barbara, with all the pecan trees," he said.

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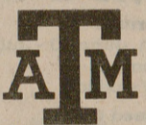


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