The Battalion STATE & LOCAL

uesday, June 20, 1989

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

AUSTIN (AP) — The \$450 million hool finance bill signed into law is not arly enough to achieve equity among stunts in rich and poor districts and leaves Texas Supreme Court as the "only pe," the president of Equity Center said

Sid Pruitt, also superintendent of the Alado school district, near Fort Worth, oted that the finance bill provides "equity ands" of \$200 million in 1989-90 and \$250 illion in 1990-91.

Those sums, Pruitt told a news conferce, "are only two small drops in a \$14 bilion bucket. In fact . . . those drops are not 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 - Edgewood vs. Kirby - which led to a ruling that Texas' school finance system is unconstitutional. That ruling was later overturned by the 3rd Court of Appeals in Austin, and is now on appeal to the state Supreme Court.

"The school finance system in place in 1985-86 was found to be under funded and highly inequitable by both the trial court and the 3rd Court of Appeals. They only

differed on the question of whether the inadequate, inequitable system was also un-constitutional," Pruitt said.

Since 1985-86, he said, inflation and the expense of meeting changes required by the Legislature have increased educational costs by at least 13 percent, while the state's contribution has increased by less than 1 percent.

Pruitt said by 1990-91 the cost of an adequate public education system will have grown to \$13 billion to \$14 billion, or 22 percent over 1985-86 financing, with the state's share increasing by less than 6 percent.

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, "The time is now to move swiftly to remedy the situation through our Supreme Court.

Richard Kirkpatrick of Copperas Cove, chairman of a group of 55 districts that in-tervened in the lawsuit, said, "The legislation just passed does not represent but a very small step toward equity, if you can term it that. Actually, it can best be termed as a down payment on inflation that's oc-

He said 'n now seems clearer than ever curred since the last school finance bill passed in June 1984.'

> 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 "hamstrung the Legislature in attempting to deal with this problem.'

> He said a \$1.2 billion appropriation for the biennium "would have been a good down payment" on public education but the Legislature chose \$450 million.

End may be in sight for measles epidemic Clements likely to widen on Page Edito But officials say nation's worst outbreak not completely over yet special session agenda people at a that the w

ence to on-c HOUSTON (AP) — The end may attempting e in sight for the nation's worst easles outbreak, but health offithis change.

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ls who have monitored the epideome time by mic that resulted in nine deaths and a hall, though 1,763 recorded cases since November say it hasn't disappeared yet. The spread of the disease in l, narrow space because I prathe spread of the disease in Houston and Harris County forced the hospitalization of 266 people, nd am never peaking in February when more nk that, regain than 100 new cases were reported it, the place each week. ig but live i

In the most recent weekly report t vou make i eleased Friday, the total dwindled dorm, lovelya iust five cases. is still mine a

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 symptoms is usually 10 to 14 days, a Hodgson, epidemiologist for the Texas Department of Health. 'We've seen enough measles to last

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 Coun-ty'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 pro-fessor of internal medicine and microbiology at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, said the combination of inadequate vac-cines 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.

Our Price

AUSTIN (AP) — Three weeks after ending their 1989 regular session, the state's part-time law-makers 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

See related story/Page 4

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-

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view. "I think they can move expeditiously.

Typically, however, special ses-sion 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 proclama-tion, "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 report-ing requirements and other changes were a top priority of the outgoing secretary of state, Jack Rains, who resigned last week.

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erybody know "I'm DART Vader," he said. "I'm your worst night-

Though he looks more like a character out of the a dormitor transit line by the Dallas Area Rapid Transit authority. I it that wat I and while hundreds of area residents have joined the tter of opinit mass transit debate the past several years, Heit has g the different emerged in just two months as one of DART's most vocritics. use a house a

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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 a Barbara with all the pecan trees." he said

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