

Tuesday, July 11, 1989

Group calls for strict enforcement of legislative, lobbyist ethics laws

AUSTIN (AP) — The citizen's group Common Cause on Monday urged stepped-up enforcement of ethics laws, charging that lobbyists increasingly are giving state legislators costly vacations without proper reporting of the gifts.

"The abuses that are now occurring are massive," Rozanne Moore McKinney, a lawyer and Common Cause of Texas board member, said. "Lobbyists themselves are complaining that they are being required to pay for expensive trips for legislators in order not to offend them."

"Trips that cost thousands of dollars are being taken at lobby expense," she said.

"Furthermore, unlike in previous years, there is no effort to connect

these trips to purposes like conventions or constituent meetings. These trips are pure and simple, a gift of a very large amount of money to curry the favor of the legislator."

McKinney's comments came in a letter to Travis County District Attorney Ronnie Earle, and she referred to recent news reports of ski trips and other vacations for legislators and gubernatorial staff members paid for by lobbyists.

Under state law, lawmakers can accept such gifts provided they are publicly reported on forms filed with the secretary of state.

But in an interview, McKinney said she believes a trend is developing in which lawmakers are soliciting gifts and not reporting them.

"Both sides (lawmakers and lobbyists) are conveniently seeming to ignore the law," she told the Associated Press.

"We're even hearing it from the private lobbyists — that they are get-

"Both sides (lawmakers and lobbyists) are conveniently seeming to ignore the law."

— Rozanne McKinney, Common Cause member

ting tired of the pressure being put on them by legislators to give them trips," she said.

"When we hear it from the lobbyists, we know it's getting pretty bad."

The state's ethics laws say lawmakers accepting gifts or money must report them appropriately as office-

holder contributions, campaign contributions or gifts.

In her letter to Earle, McKinney said she hoped prosecutors would put lawmakers on notice that reporting laws would be strictly enforced.

"The statute is clearly not being followed with the result that there is now massive acceptance of huge benefits with no reporting of the acceptance of these gifts," she said.

"The prosecuting attorneys responsible for the enforcement of our laws must step in and order a halt to this unreported activity," she added.

Her letter referred to a December ski trip that was sponsored by the Texas State Troopers Association,

which later opposed a bill to require police groups to publicly disclose where they spend money they raise through telephone solicitations.

One lawmaker who took the trip, Rep. Ron Lewis, D-Mauriceville, said such outings are legal and a perk of a public office that pays only \$600 a month.

Dallas holds suspect in Kansas murder

DALLAS (AP) — Richard Grissom Jr., sought for questioning by Kansas authorities in the stabbing death of one woman and disappearance of three others, refused Monday to waive extradition to that state.

The 28-year-old painter was held without bail in the custody of the Dallas County Sheriff's Department, agency spokesman Jim Ewell said. Grissom was held on a warrant for alleged parole violations, authorities said. Grissom has not been charged in the slaying or disappearances.

Grissom, arrested at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport on Friday, appeared for less than five minutes Monday before visiting Magistrate Virgil Lang.

Lang scheduled another hearing for Grissom on Aug. 9 as part of an extradition process that could last up to 90 days.

State District Judge Keith Dean appointed Dallas attorney Paul R. Shunatona to represent Grissom.

"The next step, I would suspect, would be to wait and see what Kansas does," Shunatona said after Mon-

day's hearing. "I'll be probably approaching some district judges here about bond."

Although he had earlier agreed to cooperate, Grissom, on the advice of his attorneys, refused Saturday to sign papers allowing his extradition to Kansas.

Credit cards, jewelry and other belongings of at least one of the missing women were recovered from Grissom's car, and he matched the description of a prowler near a woman's apartment complex, Kansas City Metro Squad Detective Larry Keller said.

No trace of the three suburban Kansas City women has been found, Keller said, but the body of the Wichita, Kan., woman has been recovered.

Authorities said Grissom had planned a date with Terri Maness, 25, of Wichita, the night of June 7, when she was strangled and stabbed repeatedly in her townhouse.

Overland Park police also began seeking Grissom on June 27 in connection with the disappearance of 24-year-old Joan Butler. She was reported missing June 16.

Grissom is also wanted for questioning in the disappearances of Lenexa, Kan., roommates Theresa J. Brown and Christine A. Rusch, both 22, Keller said. They were reported missing June 26.

Grissom was convicted at age 16 of fatally bludgeoning a 72-year-old Lansing, Kan., woman with a railroad spike.

In Kansas City, police said about \$2,100 was found on Grissom when he was arrested Friday in Dallas, and he apparently had used cash in his travels since leaving the area last month.

About \$3,300 was withdrawn through cashed checks and automatic teller machine cards from the bank accounts of two of the women about the time of their disappearance, police said.

The bank accounts belong to Butler and Rusch.

Bill stiffens penalties for ritualistic crimes

AUSTIN (AP) — Stiffer penalties could be imposed for crimes committed against children during a ritual under a bill added to the special legislative session agenda by Gov. Bill Clements.

The measure was one of 15 placed before lawmakers for their consideration Monday by Clements, who controls the special session agenda.

Other crime-related measures would allow all assets from drug sales to be seized and require mandatory drug testing for offenders on probation or parole.

The expansion brings to 41 the number of issues the governor has included in the special session, which was called primarily to deal with workers' compensation reform.

"We must get tough with criminals, not simply in words, but in action," Clements said. "Public safety is paramount."

"Convicted criminals must pay their price to society," he said in a statement. "At the same time, it is imperative that we attack the root cause of crime — drugs. These additional anti-crime measures will underscore our efforts to do both."

The ritual crimes bill would enhance penalties for child abuse one degree if it could be shown at trial that the crime was committed as part of a ritual or ceremony and involved a child under age 17. It would not affect crimes that already are first-degree felonies.

Other issues added to the agenda Monday are:

- Creation of the State Trust Fund Investment Review Council.
- Efficiency in state government.
- Alcohol and drug abuse education for public school students and teachers.

Town says new law discriminates

PATTON VILLAGE, Texas (AP) — Officials in Patton Village and other small towns famed for their speed traps are threatening to go to court to try to overturn a new state law that limits the amount of cash they can collect from traffic fines.

"The legislation helps probably 600 cities in the state and hurts nine or 10 I know of," Frank Sturzl, director of the Texas Municipal League, said.

But that's of little importance in Patton Village, where traffic fines account for about 65 percent of the \$300,000 annual budget in the tiny community northeast of Houston.

"I don't know if we have any alternative," Patton Village City Attorney Lloyd Oliver says of a possible lawsuit.

The measure signed last month by Gov. Bill Clements eliminates costly administrative expenses tied to the law it replaced and probably adversely affects only towns that do not have property taxes, Sturzl said.

But opponents contend the law is discriminatory because the 30 percent limit is arbitrary. They also take is-

sue with the application to places with less than 5,000 population.

"Let's do it to everyone if we're going to do it," Oliver said.

Complaints about police, particularly those in Patton Village, spurred enactment of the measure, written by Rep. Keith Valigura, R-Conroe.

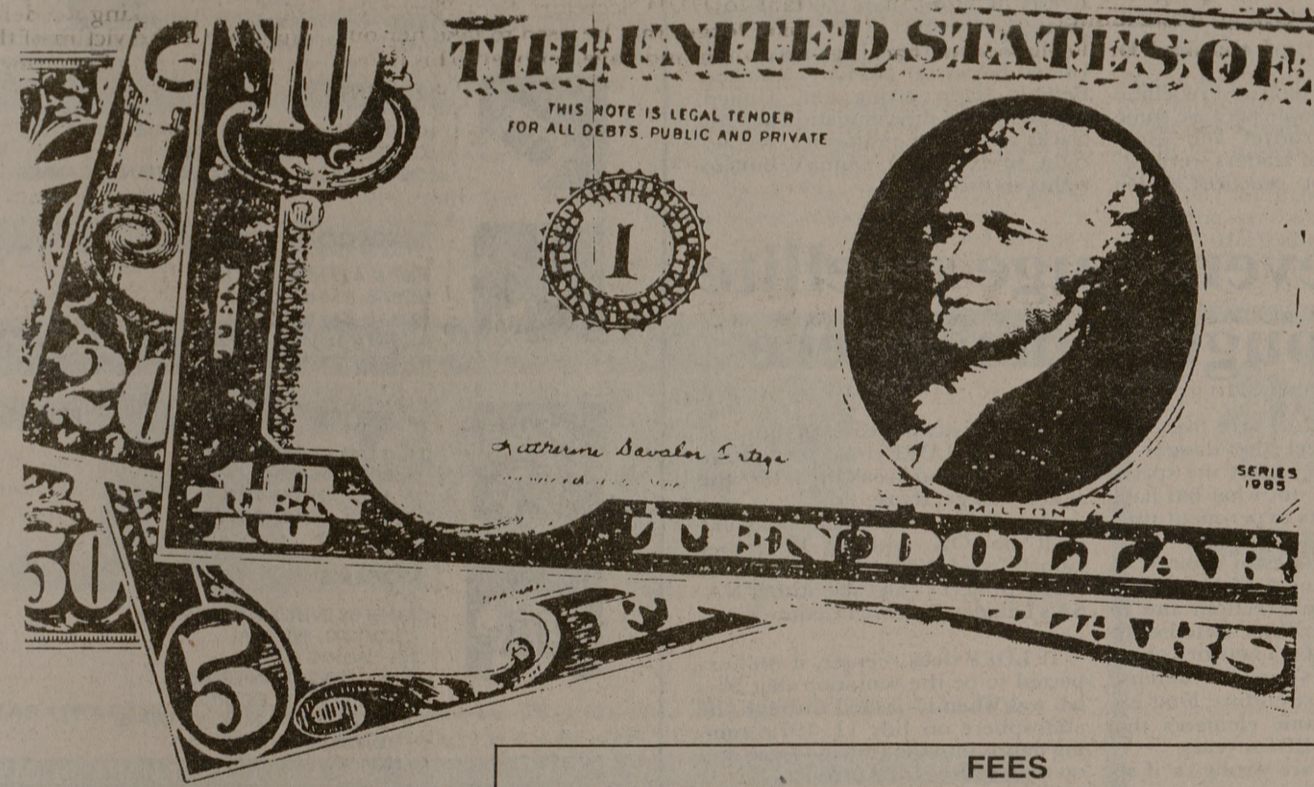
Under the law, towns under 5,000 population can keep all traffic fine money until the total receipts equal 30 percent of the previous year's budget.

After that, the town can retain only \$1 from each fine.

Before the new measure, there was no limit on total income from traffic fines.

Backers of the law see it as a fair way to eliminate speed traps and view it as a message that towns can't cover their budgets with revenues from motorists, most of whom are from out of town.

Already, officials in the Fayette County town of Garmine say their plans to add a second police officer to the department are being thwarted by the new law.



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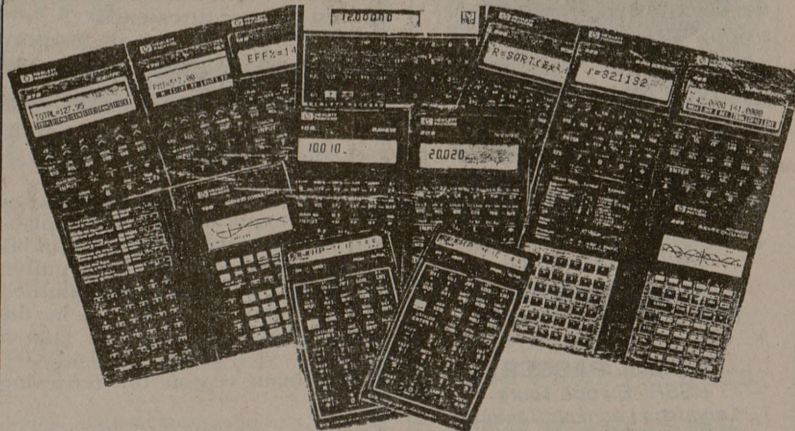
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