

Friday, November 3, 1989

Lobby interests 'own' Smith, senatorial candidate Delord says

By Michael Kelley
 Of The Battalion Staff

Saying Republican senatorial candidate Richard Smith is part of the one percent of legislators who are "owned" by lobby interests, Democratic senatorial candidate Ron Delord claims to be the best representative of the constituents of Texas Senate District Five.



Delord

Delord announced his candidacy for the Texas Senate Oct. 23 at the Bryan Courthouse after Sen. Kent Caperton, D-Bryan, Class of '71, said he would not seek reelection. "Lobby groups that are paid literally millions of dollars to protect the profits of a private company are the ones Richard Smith is in bed with," Delord said in a telephone interview Thursday. "When he files his first financial report, look and see who gave him money, and you'll find that every major for-profit lobby in this state is supporting him."

Delord said Smith is dependent upon the small core of high-dollar lobbyists that have unbalanced the legislative process in Austin and embarrassed the 99 percent of legislators who are good.

Delord then said the workman's compensation reform Smith is working on in the Texas House is for the sole benefit of the insurance company and the large employer.

Delord said he is critical of the proposed reform for worker's compensation because it would use politically-appointed boards to hear the claims of injured workers, and these boards could easily be influenced by interest groups such as big business. He suggests the use of a jury trial.

"The small 'mom and pop' operation doesn't have worker's comp claims," Delord said. "You get huge companies like road construction companies and heavy industrial employers with highly dangerous jobs that want to have an undue benefit in this thing."

"I'm not saying that worker's comp does not need to be reformed, but it needs to be fair, and we cannot deny people the right of a jury trial."

Delord also said he has and will continue to work for lobby reform and ethics legislation in the Texas Legislature. He said he wants automatic disclosure laws that will

make it mandatory for legislators and state officials to report anything they receive from lobbyists and for lobbyists to report to whom and for what they spent money.

"I'm not as concerned with what the lobby does and what the legislator does as (much as) I'm concerned that it be reported," Delord said.

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— Ron Delord,
 Democratic senatorial candidate

said. "It is the public's right to judge whether it's proper or improper."

"My position on reform is that if you're afraid to tell your constituents that some big lobby sent you hunting, fishing and on trips, then it's probably wrong," he said. "The voter should be the judge of whether or not the legislator is in the pocket of someone or in undue influence."

He said he sees nothing wrong with lobbying for legislation, and that people should be allowed to work with legislators to influence legislation. He claims the problem is

with "undue" influence and the failure to report where the influence comes from.

"We have to make ethics reform our No. 1 priority to bring respect to the legislature and to inquire the public to bring back that trust that the public should have in us," Delord said.

Delord proposes that all school districts be provided with the funding to provide a basic curriculum, equipment and facilities so all schoolchildren may have a basic and equal education. He said he also wants all Texas teachers to receive comparable salaries and benefits.

"What you get above that (basic state funding) should then be determined by the local school district," Delord said. "If you want a planetar-

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Delaware prof says engineering students need varied education

By Todd Swearingen
 Of The Battalion Staff

Dr. Russel C. Jones presented "Trends in Engineering Education" to address the issues that are of concern to the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

Jones, a University of Delaware research professor and former president of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, spoke Thursday as part of the Distinguished Civil Engineer Lecture Series sponsored by the Texas A&M Civil Engineering Dept.

Jones said the ABET has been studying the need for a five year curriculum at the undergraduate level.

"It's impossible to turn out a technically literate graduate in four years of undergraduate study — one that can read the literature and keep up with a field like environmental engineering or soil mechanics or structural engineering," Jones said.

He said the areas of emphasis include design experience and a broader educational background. A problem exists with students

fulfilling their humanities requirements with introductory level courses, rather than gaining in-depth knowledge, he said. It is much more important to learn how to think as a social scientist, rather than taking a lot of unrelated introductory courses, Jones said.

Jones said it is necessary to make students aware that the engineering industry competes on an international level and they must think in terms of supplying services worldwide.

He said students need to know at least one additional language and be aware of the different design requirements and construction processes used by different countries.

"Most countries around the world spend considerably more time in preparing their engineering graduates than we do," he said.

"They do a better job typically in their high schools," Jones said. "They often do a longer term and better job at the graduate and undergraduate level."

"And if we're going to compete in that world, we've simply got to do a better job," Jones said.

Hobby calls for income tax to solve finance problems

AUSTIN (AP) — Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby called for a state income tax, saying Thursday the politically unpopular levy would resolve school finance problems and be fairer than current Texas taxes.

"It would, I suggest to you, be a considerable improvement for the education system, the business community and the tax system of this state," Hobby told the Texas Association of Taxpayers.

A state income tax should couple with relief from other taxes that unfairly burden the poor and discourage business investment, Hobby said.

"If I'm the father of the Texas income tax, can I also be the guy who abolished the franchise tax, lowered property taxes and lowered the sales tax?" he asked after his speech to the business-based association.

An income tax would address a Texas Supreme Court ruling that the current school finance system, with its funding inequities among school districts, is unconstitutional, Hobby said.

"If I'm the father of the Texas income tax, can I also be the guy who abolished the franchise tax, lowered property taxes and lowered the sales tax?"

— Bill Hobby,
 Lieutenant Governor

The school funding system "relies on a combination of local property taxes and state money."

"A personal income tax of 4 percent on a broad measure of income, even with generous exemptions and deductions, would

raise enough money to replace every dollar of school property taxes, and add almost another \$1 billion per year to fund education," he said.

Hobby, a Democrat who is not seeking election after heading the Texas Senate since 1973, acknowledged that the proposed levy is a political hot potato in Texas, which has neither a personal nor corporate income tax.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Kent Hance launched his campaign for the 1990 GOP nomination by pledging to prohibit an income tax. Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Jim Mattox is pushing a lottery for school funding, calling it the only alternative to an income tax.

"Most statewide candidates will be forced to oppose it," Hobby said. "But if the idea of an income tax is not put fairly and accurately into the debate of this state's future, we are letting our children and grandchildren down."

The property tax hits poor taxpayers harder than the wealthy, and it has been an unreliable funding source as property values have fallen this decade, Hobby said.

The sales tax also is regressive, affects investment and weighs too heavily on busi-

ness, he said, while the franchise tax imposes a levy on investments and is unfair.

The income tax is more just, he said, but "has been the subject of the worse smear campaign since Joe McCarthy."

Texas, the most populous state that doesn't levy its own personal income tax, is tied for the third highest state sales tax in the nation, at 6 cents per dollar.

Although Hobby said he would like to see a state income tax considered right away, he predicted it will not be examined again until lawmakers meet in regular session in 1991.

The Legislature meets in special session beginning Nov. 14 on workers' compensation, and again next spring to address school finance, but special session agendas are controlled by the governor.

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