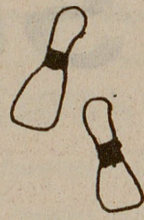


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Texas elections

Pay-increase supporters puzzled by voter response

AUSTIN (AP) — Supporters of higher wages for members of the Texas Legislature were scratching their heads Wednesday, trying to figure out how to convince voters to approve a pay hike.

"It's a cause that is so obviously right that it's hard for me to understand the opposition to it, but that opposition is traditionally there," said Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, who has presided over the Senate since 1973.

While Texans approved money for everything from sewers to prisons on Tuesday's election, the only statewide propositions to fail involved more money for legislators.

Proposition 1, to triple legislative salaries to \$23,300 annually, was defeated by a final margin of 63.4 percent to 36.6 percent.

Proposition 11, to boost lawmakers' daily expense allowance from

\$30 to \$81, was rejected 52.8 percent to 47.2 percent.

Analysts pointed to several factors as dooming the raises.

First, lawmakers sought the pay hike in the same year they accepted \$1.86 million in gifts and entertainment from lobbyists, largesse that include ski trips and vacations in Acapulco. But they didn't pledge to reform ethics rules.

"The Defeat of Proposition 1 shows that Texans want reform before raises," said Tom Smith, director of the government watchdog group Public Citizen.

Second, in their bid to win voter approval lawmakers proposed to "limit" their pay by linking it to the governor's salary, which the Legislature sets. Besides tripling their pay now, it would have removed requirements for future voter approval.

"Texans are saying that we want to be tricked," Lynn G. chairman of the anti-raise Texas for Financial Responsibility. "We don't want misleading and deceptive practices, and we are just going to stand for it."

Third, there is traditional opposition to pay hikes, and this year came on the heels of public anger over a proposed pay raise for congressmen who make \$89,000 a year.

Since 1881, Texas legislators asked voters to approve pay raises. Only four of those have passed, the last in 1975 when salaries rose from \$400 a month to \$600.

"The pay raise has been on the ballot every six or eight years, but has only passed one of those (1975)," Hobby said. "So it's a very tough thing to sell."

Business officials celebrate renewal of tax amendment

DALLAS (AP) — Texas business officials were celebrating the return of the "freeport" amendment Wednesday, a measure they say is long overdue and a definite bright spot for the struggling Texas economy.

"The approval of the freeport amendment is more important to the Texas economy than the super collider because it will allow for more jobs," Alma Faulkner, a spokesman for the Texas Association of Business, said.

Voters approved Proposition 5 by a vote of 743,124, 64 percent, to 410,338, 36 percent, on a statewide ballot Tuesday.

The proposition gives counties the option of dropping property taxes on goods brought into Texas and stored temporarily for manufacturing or redistribution.

"This makes Texas products more

competitive in national and international markets," Glenn E. West, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, said.

"Without question it should help encourage the exportation of Texas-made products to the nation and to the world."

Texas counties will have the option of implementing the amendment before April 15. While some businesses are excited over the prospect of tax-free production of some exports, others were more skeptical.

Ed Miller, corporate tax manager for Dallas-based Texas Instruments, said the struggling Texas economy and the state's need for tax dollars may keep the amendment from being implemented locally around the state.

"The entire state is pretty much in the same boat," Miller said. "There is a need for tax dollars for education and other priorities."

Experts: Issue barely passes, confuses voters

LUBBOCK (AP) — Proposition 18 was barely approved by voters on Election Day, but because it was a controversial issue.

Experts on the constitution amendment believe that if voters knew the bond would continue to replenish the Ogallala Aquifer and improved water conservation, it would have been approved by a much larger margin.

With 576,109 votes cast, Proposition 18 was approved by 51 percent of voters.

A recount of the votes requested by at least 25 registered voters or a campaign treasurer a special-purpose group that was involved in the election.

The amendment extends the November 1989 deadline for the state to issue \$200 million in agricultural water conservation bonds approved in 1985.

So what does that mean? The Texas Department of Agriculture, the Texas Water Commission and the Texas Water Development Board couldn't answer that.

However Ken Kramer, director of the Lone Star Sierra Club chapter, remembered why the bonds were approved in the first place.

His and a range of other activist organizations lobbied fiercely in 1985 for passage of the bond in an effort to stop the continued decline of state groundwater levels and water waste.

The bonds were part of a plan to provide financial assistance to farmers buying more efficient irrigation systems and slow the decline of the state's groundwater levels which greatly exceed normal recharge rates.

"When the bonds were first authorized in 1985, there was a great deal of concern that it was a pilot loan program to see whether this would work in practice," Kramer said.

But during the time the program was being tested, the state water agencies were reorganizing and the program was delayed, Kramer said.

Whitmire follows victory with trip to Washington

HOUSTON (AP) — Kathy Whitmire, still savoring her re-election as mayor of the nation's fourth-largest city, took the day off Wednesday before leaving for Washington where she's planning to convince Democrats to host the 1992 convention here.

Whitmire finished in Tuesday's balloting with 173,285 votes, or 63.2 percent, to 87,836 or 32 percent, for her main challenger and former Mayor Fred Hofheinz. Four other candidates shared the remaining vote, which amounted to less than 5 percent.

Whitmire's election to a fifth two-year term tied a city record for longevity.

"The campaign is over, tonight we have a victory," Whitmire said Tuesday night as her 2-1 triumph became clear. "We need to move Houston

into a great new decade that is only two months away. Our high priority in the 1990s is to make sure the economic recovery benefits all of Houston."

"You have given me such a high honor," she told supporters. "I am so proud. You have placed your trust in me. My goal is to live up to that trust and to make sure our community is the greatest city anywhere in the world."

The mayor stayed at her victory party at the AstroVillage Hotel until past 2 a.m. Wednesday, her spokesman Lorie Arnett said.

The loss of Hofheinz, 51, an attorney, snuffed his bid for a political comeback. The son of Roy Hofheinz, the Harris County judge whose legacy is the Houston Astrodome, served as mayor twice in the 1970s.

Harris County approves bond to enlarge Houston ship channel

HOUSTON (AP) — Aside from re-electing Mayor Kathy Whitmire to a fifth term, voters in the nation's fourth-largest city also overwhelmingly approved a \$130 million Harris County bond issue to enlarge the Houston Ship Channel. But opponents say the project ultimately will be defeated.

Sixty-three percent of the voters Tuesday favored the bonds, which Port of Houston officials have said would require a tax increase of 60 cents a month for the average homeowner.

The debate featured a complex swirl of competing claims involving the massive dredging project's potential to boost Houston's economy, kill or contaminate marine life in Galveston Bay and enhance navigation safety.

Jim Pugh, port executive director, said the vote indicates county voters are willing to "invest in the future" and "aren't going to be dissuaded by some irrational alarmism and get try to understand an issue and get the facts as clearly as they can."

But Dick Morrison, a leader of project opponents, said port officials' "misrepresentations will come back to haunt them," and the project

would ultimately be defeated.

"People will wake up and realize how important their habitat is, how important their world is, and not some promise to create thousands of jobs," Morrison said.

Even with approval of the bonds,

the battle will go on. The \$130 million is only the local share of \$1 billion to deepen the channel from 40 feet and widen it from 400 to 600 feet.

Both sides saw Tuesday's election as a crucial opportunity to voice their sentiment to Congress.

Texas voter turnout exceeded expectations

AUSTIN (AP) — Turnout for Tuesday's elections was 14.2 percent of the state's 8.2 million registered voters, the biggest constitutional amendment vote in more than a decade, the secretary of state's office said Wednesday.

A total of 1,159,856 Texans cast ballots in the statewide constitutional amendment election, Mark Toohey, spokesman for Secretary of State George Bayoud said.

That exceeded the projection of 12 percent, or 985,000, made last week.

"We're thrilled," Toohey said. "We're happy. It was better than expected."

Expected for 1987, when a referendum on legalizing horse racing gambling was on the constitutional amendment ballot, Tuesday's turnout exceeded every amendment election since 1975, Toohey said.

Toohey said Harris County voters who Houston voters elected a mayor, accounted for about 25 percent of the statewide vote total.

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