

Board reverses payment rate freeze

AUSTIN (AP) — The board of the Texas Department of Human Services, which already faces a \$550 million, two-year budget shortfall, on Monday decided to pay more money to health care providers that sued the agency.

DHS Commissioner Ron Lindsey said he has asked lawmakers to resolve the deficit by giving the welfare agency the \$211 million in state funds it needs for 1990 and 1991.

The rest of the \$550 million projected shortfall is made up of federal matching funds that would be lost without state appropriations.

But Lindsey said Gov. Bill Clements only will allow lawmakers to consider shifting the \$32 million the agency needs in state funds this fiscal year from its 1991 budget.

Medical care providers to receive more money

To cover the projected loss of funds for 1991, he said, Clements would require lawmakers to implement a plan to take greater advantage of federal matching funds.

Rossanna Salazar, Clements' press secretary, confirmed the governor might add such a plan to the call of the fourth special legislative session, which convened Monday.

"If all this were to fall into place, the governor would consider adding this to the call," she said.

Salazar said Clements would not

allow lawmakers to consider using new taxes to make up the state deficit.

Last week, DHS officials revised the department's projected deficit down to \$550 million from the \$851 million they predicted in mid-March.

Lindsey said the revision is based on more recent figures showing that fewer pregnant women and children have been applying for aid than was projected earlier.

The rate increase for nursing

homes and hospices providing Medicaid services to patients included \$65 million in reimbursements, reversing a rate freeze enacted by the board two weeks ago.

But a representative of two nursing home groups that sued DHS last week said the increase is not enough to dissuade them.

Sarah Speights, public information officer of the Texas Health Care Association, said the \$65 million increase will pay for some federal mandates, like a minimum wage increase that took effect April 1.

But she said it will not provide quality care for the 61,000 patients — 70 percent of all nursing home residents — who are dependent on Medicaid.

Plant's nuclear reactor tests will begin despite controversy

GLEN ROSE (AP) — Fifteen years after the start of construction and 10 years behind schedule, workers prepared Monday to begin the first sustained nuclear reaction at the Comanche Peak nuclear power plant.

But an advocacy group hoping to block the plant's start-up said it will ask the U.S. Supreme Court to reopen licensing hearings to allow a full investigation of Comanche Peak.

TU Electric received a license Feb. 9 which allows the utility to test one of its two reactors at up to 5 percent of power.

There have been no problems with any of the pre-operational tests, a plant spokesman said, although the utility on March 12 declared an "unusual event," the lowest form of an emergency, when an electrical defect triggered an injection of cooling water into the reactor's core.

"We're working toward starting it up somewhere late this evening or early tomorrow morning," Mark Manroe said Monday. "Of course, once again that's with the proviso that if we run into something that we need to deal with, we'll deal with it."

"We're not going to rush into anything." The plant will remain under the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's close supervision, Joe Gilliland, a spokesman for the NRC, said.

"We've got four or five people on site now, as we've had all along," Gilliland said. "We're going to be monitoring their actions as they proceed toward their chain reaction."

NRC inspectors will begin an around-the-clock vigil at the plant once the chain reaction actually starts, Gilliland said. "Even after we start the sustained nuclear reaction it'll be several months before the plant will be at full operation," Manroe said. "We're going to inch up gradually."

Efforts to block the nuclear reaction were set back Friday when Supreme Court justice Byron R. White denied the request by Citizens for Fair Utility Regulation to delay the start of nuclear reaction.

The group contends the plant is unsafe. "I'm terribly disappointed in Justice White's decision," said Betty Brink, after hearing the ruling. Brink

"Even after we start the sustained nuclear reaction it'll be several months before the plant will be at full operation. We're going to inch up gradually."

— Mark Manroe, plant spokesman

is a board member of CFUR, which is pressing for a full Supreme Court review on the plant's licensing.

TU Electric officials predict that the first of the facility's two units will reach full power later this year.

Construction of Comanche Peak, which is located about 40 miles south of Fort Worth, began in 1975.

Original estimates put the total cost at \$779 million. The facility's price is now \$9.1 billion.

TU Electric has asked the Public Utility Commission for a \$442 million, 10.5 percent rate increase to pay for the cost of building Unit 1.

The only other nuclear power plant in the state is the South Texas Project near Bay City, which has been operating since March 1988. The plant is managed by Houston Lighting & Power and supplies electricity to Houston, Austin, San Antonio and Corpus Christi.

TU Electric serves 5 million customers in 85 other counties in Texas, including the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Linde begins nationwide tree planting

Associated Press

DANBURY, Conn. (AP) — Nineteen communities around the country, including the Houston suburb of Deer Park, will be getting 50,000 trees as part of a tree-planting program by the Linde Division of Union Carbide Industrial Gases Inc.

The program is the beginning of a decade-long proposal by Linde to plant half a million trees in 130 communities participating across the country, the company said.

The initial plantings will be directed at the 19 communities where Linde currently operates facilities.

The company said a unique element of the program would be development of care grounds for the American Liberty Elm, which is resistant to Dutch Elm disease.

The plants being sent to communities include White Flowering Dogwood, Green Ash and White Oak.

Linde is the leading U.S. supplier of oxygen and other industrial gases.

Faculty

(Continued from page 1)

Ozden O. Ochoa, who was unopposed
Roy A. Hartman, who received 58 percent of the vote
GEOSCIENCES:
Jim Mazzullo, who received 94 percent of the vote
LIBERAL ARTS:
Martin J. Medhurst, who received

98 percent of the vote
Richard L. Street, who received 58 percent of the vote
Steve M. Murdock, who was unopposed
Michael L. Greenwald, who was unopposed
Edward J. Smith, who was unopposed
STERLING C. EVANS LI-

BRARY:
Jacque Halverson, who won in a tie-breaking draw
MEDICINE:
John D. Fisher, who received 88 percent of the vote
Dottie Eakin, who received 87 percent of the vote
SCIENCE:
Kenn E. Harding, who was unop-

posed
Bill Foster, who received 63 percent of the vote
Ronald A. Bryan, who was unopposed
VETERINARY MEDICINE:
Michael E. Tatum, who was unopposed
Mary A. Herron, who was unop-

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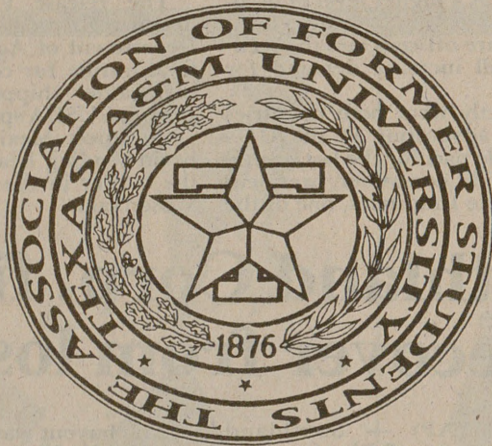
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