

Mosbacher criticizes use of taxes

AUSTIN (AP) — The Republican candidate for lieutenant governor Wednesday accused his Democratic rival, state Comptroller Bob Bullock, of lavish spending of tax money.

GOP hopeful Rob Mosbacher said Bullock had spent \$137,000 on items "ranging from the strange to the opulent."

The list included \$84 brass ashtrays, a \$749 automatic icemaker, \$3,991 worth of bronze lamps, 10 sets of stereo headphones for \$491, and a \$165 magnet shaped like a dollar sign and reading "Comptroller's Suggestions," Mosbacher said.

"There is simply a clear pattern of abuse of taxpayers' dollars for the personal convenience and comfort of Bob Bullock and his staff," Mosbacher charged.

Bullock said the purchases were legitimate and criticized Mosbacher for his management of the fiscally troubled state Department of Human Services. Mosbacher, an appointee of GOP Gov. Bill Clements, chairs the board overseeing that agency.

"If Rob Mosbacher spent half as much time studying his budget at DHS as he has on the comptroller's old records, he would have known about the \$1 million in bonuses paid the DHS employees while the agency had an \$800 million deficit," John Bender, a Bullock spokesman, said.

Bender said the items purchased were for the use of comptroller staff, who collect state taxes.

"We're not going to debate these things with a state agency head who said yesterday he doesn't have to defend his mismanagement and inefficiency because he has never claimed his office is well-managed," Bender said.

Bullock has been state comptroller since first winning the election in 1974.

On Tuesday, Mosbacher criticized Bullock's purchase of \$32,000 worth of briefcases for state

auditors. The comptroller's office said they were needed on the job and belonged to the office, not individuals.

Mosbacher said Wednesday that his review of the comptroller's budget records had turned up "extravagant spending."

His examples included three \$3,495 mobile telephones; 61 coffee makers totaling \$8,219; a \$429 portable oxygen system; a \$1,303 riding lawn mower; 697 computer and calculator carrying cases costing \$36,287, and three \$89 portable electronic spellers purchased from The Sharper Image.

"There is simply a clear pattern of abuse of taxpayers' dollars for the personal convenience and comfort of Bob Bullock and his staff."

— Rob Mosbacher, GOP hopeful

Mosbacher said Bullock also spent \$71,750 in state funds on his state airplane "to, as the work order said, 'paint all necessary components to match existing color scheme' among other things."

"Bob uses campaign contributions to pay his country club dues and taxpayer money to make his airplane look pretty. Enough is enough," Mosbacher said.

Bullock's spokesman said most of the money for the airplane repairs went to purchase safety-

related equipment. The paint was a minor item in two pages of specifications so the new gear matched, Bender said.

He also said the state would be better off if Mosbacher spent more time minding his own department's business.

"Mosbacher didn't mention the fact that the comptroller's office spent \$47 million on computer equipment while he spent over \$100 million for computers," Bender said. "He didn't mention it because the comptroller's work and his don't."

"If he spent half as much time on DHS child protective services, this state might be a safer place for our children," Bender said.

In other political news:

• Democratic state treasurer hopeful Nikki Van Hightower renewed her criticism of GOP candidate Kay Bailey Hutchison, saying she should make public her income tax returns.

"My opponent's refusal to release her tax returns raises one basic question. What is she trying to hide?" Van Hightower asked.

Hutchison's campaign manager, Gary Bruner, said she has released her 1988 tax returns and soon will make public her 1989 return.

"Nikki Van Hightower's latest exercise in whining, unsubstantiated charges and rhetorical questions about tax returns and ethics should go only one place — in the ash can," he said.

• Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ann Richards proposed a stepped up effort to preserve rural hospitals and health care.

"It's time Texas had a governor who thinks the problems of rural Texans are just as important as those of city folks," she said. "We need a governor who will fight for rural health care in Washington."

Suspended police chief won't resign in Dallas

Investigation of police shooting evolves into perjury charges

DALLAS (AP) — Perjury charges were filed Wednesday against suspended Police Chief Mack Vines, on leave because of an investigation into his testimony to a special panel looking into a police shooting.

nothing wrong and has refused to resign.

In a statement released Wednesday afternoon, Vines said, "I welcome the opportunity to have this matter heard by the grand jury.

"I have said all along that, for the good of all concerned, I want this issue resolved, the statement said. "While I am sorry the matter has gone this far, I am also aware that it has long been the tradition and custom in this community for the district attorney to refer matters of this nature to the grand jury. I respect that policy."

Some city council members said the charges alone are enough to cost Vines permanently the job he has held since July 1988. During his tenure, Vines has angered some veteran officers while winning the support of some leaders in the minority community.

"I think it would be nearly impossible for Chief Vines to lead this police department with the confidence of the city into the future," Councilman Jerry Bartos said. "Humpty Dumpty is broken and I don't think there's any reasonable way of putting that all together again."

"Today, as a result of (the) investigation, seven perjury cases have been filed and referred to a Dallas County grand jury against Vines," District Attorney John Vance said.

"It's sufficient to note that we found in that investigation ... seven separate counts of aggravated perjury," Vance said. "I think the chief made two appearances (before the panel), but we can't go into what is alleged in each of those because that is still pending before the grand jury."

Vance said the charges would be presented to the grand jury on Sept. 10.

City Manager Jan Hart said Vines, 51, would remain on indefinite suspension and named a new acting chief.

Vines' attorney, Kim Wade, is "not speaking with the media," a woman who answered the phone at Wade's office said Wednesday. Vines in the past has said he did

High priced oil will hinder Texas farmers

LUBBOCK (AP) — Iraq's invasion of Kuwait may be causing panic in the sweltering sands of the Middle East, but tensions also are rising in the corn fields and parched plains of Texas.

Higher harvest and production costs due to rising oil prices have Texas farmers stewing.

"We could see general farming production costs increase as much as five percent, which is a pretty hefty increase," Don Ethridge, an agricultural economics professor at Texas Tech, said Wednesday. "If oil prices stay up where they are, it can only get worse for farmers."

After Iraq invaded Kuwait Aug. 2, diesel prices climbed from around 70 cents a gallon to around \$1.15.

Farmers will feel the pinch as they begin pouring the fuel into their tractors and combines to harvest cotton, corn, sugar beets, pinto beans and peanuts within the next two weeks.

"All of our combines and tractors use diesel, which has shot up 25 to 40 cents a gallon. At the same time, the cost of corn is going down. So that narrows our profit — if there is any."

—Doug Higgins, farmer

"Diesel prices have already gone up 40 to 50 cents per gallon and we are not even in a fighting situation over there," Carl King, president of the Texas Corn Growers Association in Dimmitt, said Wednesday.

"This has been the most expensive year I have ever seen in agriculture and right now the outlook doesn't look so good. If we get into a war over there, prices will shoot up even higher."

Farmers in South Texas and the Coastal Bend completed much of their corn and grain sorghum harvest before the impact of the increased energy prices could be felt, said Noble Kearney, agriculture extension agronomist in Uvalde.

"Many of the farmers have oil stored on their farms," Kearney said. "So the cotton harvest, which is just getting under way in South Texas, should also escape the crunch."

But farmers in North Texas and the Plains, who are preparing for harvest, fear they will not be able to dodge the cost increase.

"All of our combines and tractors use diesel, which has shot up 25 to 40 cents a gallon," said Doug Higgins, a cotton, corn and sugar beet farmer outside of Lubbock. "At the same time, the cost of corn is going down. So that narrows our profit — if there is any."

Corn farmers in the Midwest are expected to yield a surplus crop due to good weather, which will drop corn prices nationally, officials said.

In North Texas, where record flooding in the spring wreaked havoc with crops, the increased oil prices may be enough to cancel harvests, Ethridge said.

"The additional fuel costs could make it uneconomic to harvest the crops that are in bad shape," he said. "Many will likely scrap their plans to harvest."

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