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The Battalion

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State legislature rejects controversial school finance reform plan

Staff and Wire Reports

Despite a court threat to cut off state school spending in just five days, the Texas House rejected a school finance reform plan Wednesday that backers said would at least buy lawmakers more time.

The 87-63 vote put lawmakers on a collision course with the Texas Supreme Court, which twice has ordered lawmakers to equitably fund poor school districts.

"I am begging you, if you believe in

legislative control of your schools, vote for this bill today," said Rep. Ernestine Glossbrenner, an Alice Democrat who heads the House Public Education Committee.

But opponents, including Rep. Steve Ogden, R-Bryan, called the measure unconstitutional and too costly, and some said it would give the state too much power over school districts.

"I voted against the bill," Ogden said Wednesday. "This bill is probably unconstitutional. It is way too complex. It's fiscally irresponsible."

"Reading the provisions of Senate

Bill 351 (the reform measure) is like coming face-to-face with your worst socialistic nightmare," said Rep. Glen Repp, R-Duncanville.

The bill would shift hundreds of millions of dollars in local property tax money from wealthier to poorer school districts within 183 new taxing districts.

One estimate put its state and local tab at \$13.9 billion over the next five years.

That estimate, along with other much lower estimates that put the cost at between \$5 and \$6 billion, is the rea-

son Ogden voted against the bill.

"One of the reasons for this is that the state government can't predict what things will cost and the Legislature will not set a limit on what it will spend," he said. "We need to stop passing legislation that will have open-ended spending commitments because we don't have the money to fund them."

Senate Education Committee Chairman Carl Parker, D-Port Arthur, slammed the House's action as "irresponsible."

Senators had approved the bill, de-

veloped by a House-Senate conference committee, on Tuesday. Some supporters said lawmakers could later change school funding law, but they needed to pass something to meet the court's deadline.

House Speaker Gib Lewis said he would like to see another try at reform before Monday's Supreme Court deadline, but Parker said lawmakers are "pipe-dreaming" if they think they can quickly come up with a new plan.

Regardless of the court order, Lewis

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SCOTT D. WEAVER/The Battalion

Highly mow-tivated

Samuel Baker, a worker for the Texas A&M landscape department, rides under a lonely oak tree as he mows the field behind the Offshore Technol-

ogy Research Center in the Research Park early Wednesday afternoon. Baker said he mows the field about once a week.

Gorbachev bans rally in Moscow

Police seal off Red Square, haul away Yeltsin supporters

MOSCOW (AP) — Police hauled away supporters of Boris Yeltsin and sealed off Red Square Wednesday, on the eve of a banned rally to defend the Russian republic leader from hard-liners' efforts to oust him.

Authorities said they would stop the rally. Helicopters hovered over the city and armored vehicles stood by at a military base not far from the Kremlin.

"Don't shoot, brothers, we are of the same blood!" the radical newspaper Kuranty said in a front-page appeal to police and soldiers.

In Washington, the Bush administration in an unusual action reminded the Soviet Union of its commitment under the Helsinki accords to allow public demonstrations.

As a signer of the 1975 accords, Moscow "reaffirmed the right of peaceful assembly and demonstrations," said State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler. However, restrictions on the right of peaceful assembly "are sometimes necessary for public safety and other legitimate grounds," she said.

Yeltsin, the popular chairman of the Russian federation parliament, faces a possible no-confidence vote at a congress of 1,063 deputies from across the largest and most populous of the 15 Soviet republics. He made no comment Wednesday on the demonstration or the no-confidence

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Noise complaints force cafe's closure

By Jayme Blaschke
 The Battalion

The Front Porch Cafe became popular with Texas A&M students by featuring a strong lineup of live music, but what made it popular is now forcing its closure.

High Stearns, owner and operator of the Front Porch Cafe, said the club will close at its present location May 18.

"I've gone through several rounds of battles with the zoning commission over our parking lot," Stearns said. "But our biggest problem has come from noise complaints."

The building, located in a largely residential area on College Main, opened in July 1978. It continuously has housed clubs,

most of which featured live music as the main attraction.

Over the past years, the number of noise complaints have increased, making it too much trouble to continue operating, he said.

"Most of the complaints have been anonymous," Stearns said. "I've talked to my neighbors closest to me, and they don't seem to have any problems. Since the complaints have been anonymous, I have to question their validity. The police think otherwise."

The closure, however, will not mark the end of the Front Porch Cafe. Plans are being made to reopen in a new location.

"It looks like we're going to move to downtown Bryan," he said. "This is all

speculation, of course, but we could be open again by the time classes begin again in the fall."

Because of Bryan's zoning laws, there will never be live music in the building again once the Front Porch Cafe is closed, Stearns said.

"The bands are the ones that are the most upset about the situation, especially the folk acts," he said. "This is one of the best sounding acoustical rooms in the state. We can move to another location, but it will be hard to get a place that sounds as good."

Throughout the problems, Stearns said his patrons have remained loyal.

"Everyone's been supportive," he said. "They've said they'll follow us wherever we move to."

Expert: Soviet demonstrators risk 'Bloody Thursday' outcome

Editor's note: Dr. Ronald Hatchett is the deputy director for the Moshier Institute for Defense Studies at Texas A&M.

Analysis
 By Dr. Ronald Hatchett

Today could well become known as "Bloody Thursday" in the Soviet Union just as Sunday, Jan. 22, 1905 became known as "Bloody Sunday" in the twilight of Imperial Russia.

On Bloody Sunday, peaceful demonstrators asking for liberal reforms were cut down by military forces of the ruling conservatives. Today history might repeat itself.

Advocates of liberal reform have pledged to take to the streets today to press their demands of a continuation of perestroika, an end to conservative rule, and to show support for Boris Yeltsin, the liberal leader of the Russian Republic Parliament whom the conservatives will try to oust from office today. The conservatives have made preparations to stop the protesters.

President Mikhail Gorbachev has banned all street demonstrations in Moscow for the next three weeks, and has concentrated Ministry of Interior security forces in the city to

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A&M athletes counsel area youth AAI motivates troubled B-CS teenagers

By Bridget Harrow
 The Battalion

Some Texas A&M athletes are taking time out of their schedules to encourage and motivate troubled youth in the Bryan-College Station area.

Aggie Athletes Involved, which started last semester, gives athletes a chance to serve as positive role models, said Karen Hoffman, a coordinator for student athlete development.

So when one A&M graduate student in counseling psychology was looking for someone to speak to a group of adolescent boys, she approached members of Aggie Athletes Involved.

Mary Ann Moore is a group leader for Preparation for Adult Living (PAL), a program for adolescent boys in foster homes.

Moore said she was familiar with A.A.I.'s recruiting of athletes to work in community projects and services.

"I was looking for someone to speak about drug and alcohol issues, peer pressure, leadership, school and a variety of different topics," Moore said.

Kevin Smith, a defensive back for the Aggie football team from Orange, is president of Aggie

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District realignment gives Barton concern

By Julie Myers
 The Battalion

U.S. Rep. Joe Barton might find his back up against a Democratic wall after the Texas Legislature draws new Congressional district lines using 1990 Census figures.

The Texas Constitution and the Federal Voting Rights Act require the Texas Legislature to reevaluate Congressional, Legislative

and State Board of Education districts after each census to reflect population shifts and ensure proper representation.

Texas will gain three congressional seats for a total of 30 representatives.

Redistricting concerns House members because they could find their districts deluged with voters of the opposite party.

In states that will lose seats, like New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois,



Joe Barton, R-Ennis, may find himself competing with a democratic incumbent if the expected redistricting takes place.

Michigan and Ohio, neighboring districts must merge, often forcing an election between incumbents.

Although Texas will gain three seats, Barton, R-Ennis, might find himself competing with a Democratic incumbent.

The Democratically-controlled

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