

Rep. Russell held accountable

MADD upset over blocked bill

AUSTIN (AP) — A national MADD official said people are appalled by a state representative who they said blocked a bill that would allow confiscation of suspected drunken drivers' licenses.

A confrontation between Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Rep. Sam Russell, D-Mount Pleasant, has been brewing over his action as chairman of the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee.

The license revocation bill passed the House during the regular legislative session and the Senate during this year's special sessions.

Russell's committee approved the bill, but it died after he did not send it to the full House for debate before the most recent special session ended Sunday.

"It's a travesty to the citizens of Texas that such a lifesaving measure which passed the Senate twice and the House once is still not law," said Milo Kirk of Dallas, MADD's national vice president.

"Administrative license revocation has proven to be the most effective countermeasure in saving lives and deterring drunk drivers, reducing injuries, and also reducing DWI recidivism," Kirk said.

Russell was blasted Sunday in a letter to the editor of his hometown newspaper by Cheryl Walker, secretary of the Texas chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Walker accused Russell of caring more about pleasing lawyers who defend drunken drivers than his constituents.

Russell received a standing ovation Sunday in the House following a speech in which he said the letter "did not provide any impetus" for him to get the bill before the legislative body.

Ms. Kirk and Bill Lewis of the state MADD chapter said Russell used the letter as an excuse to not sign the bill.

"I don't think Mr. Russell intended to sign the bill, whether

that letter had been published or not," said Lewis.

However, Russell denied the allegation. He said he believed time effectively had run out on the proposal, since lawmakers intended to end the session by adjourning "sine die" Sunday night.

"It became pretty obvious to me that once again this bill was just caught at the end of the session," Russell said.

"It does look like I killed this bill," he said. "But I can promise you, had we not been adjourning 'sine die' that evening, you would've seen that bill on the floor of the House."

Russell said he questioned the constitutionality of the bill, and said it did nothing to encourage DWI education and treatment.

Under the bill, people arrested for driving while intoxicated who failed or refused a blood or breath alcohol test would lose their license for 90 days for a first offense, or one year for subsequent offenses.

LBJ holiday draws harsh criticism from Republicans

AUSTIN (AP) — Republican lawmakers ripped a state employee holiday celebrating former President Lyndon B. Johnson's birthday.

But State employees, already fuming over a lost 3 percent pay raise, blasted the GOP group.

The House Republican Caucus issued a statement saying that while most Texas employees went to work Tuesday, "state employees had the option of enjoying a taxpayer-paid holiday."

"Today's holiday will give state employees a chance to rest up for the Labor Day weekend," said Milton Rister, director of the caucus.

"This just shows that the Republican Caucus is insensitive to the work of public employees," Eduardo Diaz, organization coordinator for the Texas State Employees Union, said.

Diaz said state government was still operating Tuesday, despite the holiday.

State agencies staff minimal crews on Johnson's birthday, and those working are allowed to take another day off during the year.

Diaz said state employees will have little to celebrate Labor Day because their pay raise, which was contingent on money being available in the recently passed budget, did not come through.

"The only thing we will be celebrating is the fact that the Republican lawmakers are not in session doing more harm to state employees and public services," he said.

But Rister said that state employees get too many holidays — 15 per year in addition to vacation.

A Republican Caucus proposal to cutback the number of state holidays to 10 was defeated in the House, he said.

Official vows to reduce juvenile crime after petition sent to Austin

LA PRYOR (AP) — Vowing to "take no prisoners," Zavala County District Attorney Robert Serna has promised angry citizens to stem what they say is an unchecked tide of juvenile crime.

Serna met with about a dozen La Pryor residents after receiving petitions containing more than 400 signatures complaining about the crime wave. The petition, sent last week to Gov. Ann Richards, legislators and law enforcement agencies, seeks "relief from the vandalism, burglary, thievery and general misbehavior by juveniles in this community."

"We have the right for equal protection under the law," said resident Max Rapp. "We should not have to sit up at night with a shotgun across our laps."

Residents say juveniles have taunted burglary victims, strutting before the community to show their age leaves them untouched.

Serna, whose comments were reported in Tuesday's editions of the San Antonio Light, said a hearing is scheduled Sept. 14 to have three La Pryor youths committed to the Texas Youth Commission on burglary charges.

"We're making the juvenile problem our top pri-

ority in Zavala County," said Serna, adding his policy is "to take no prisoners and send them up to TYC."

Some residents asked if unruly juveniles could be placed in state custody or made to perform community service for their alleged crimes.

"Don't you think something on the local level could be done to humiliate them the way they've humiliated us by coming into our home and robbing us?" Dwight McHazzlett asked.

The citizens called on Serna; his father, Sheriff Jose Serna; and the district's chief probation officer, Marcial Reyes Jr., to act immediately against known juvenile suspects.

Reyes told the group the justice system applies different standards to juveniles, making enforcement and jailing youths a lengthy and difficult process.

"We're doing the best that we can, but it's not good enough for you right now," Reyes said, adding that his office is understaffed and has only one officer to cover Dimmit and Zavala counties.

The district attorney said he was using money from two other counties in his district to help prose-

'Gentleman Bandit' surrenders

Believed to be responsible for nearly 100 robberies

HOUSTON (AP) — A tall, casually dressed, middle-aged man surrendered to police Tuesday and identified himself as the mannerly "Gentleman Bandit" believed responsible for robbing nearly 100 businessmen in Texas and Louisiana.

Lon Perry, 49, of Houston, flanked by attorneys Allen Isbell and Rick Brass, waded through a group of reporters, walked up the steps of police headquarters and stood quietly at the front desk while he waited for detectives to take him away.

"We're not going to make any statement at this time," said Isbell, who identified Perry.

Perry, his gray hair combed neatly, wore a blue and red plaid

shirt, gray beltless slacks and black tasseled shoes. He appeared somewhat nervous, his hands shaking slightly as he wiped his face several times.

Isbell identified Perry as a longtime Houston resident who lost his oil industry-related job a couple of years ago during the energy bust. Isbell said Perry became depressed because he could not find a job, so he turned to crime.

"We're going to have a lot of preliminaries to take care of," Sgt. D.J. McWilliams of the Houston Police Robbery Division said.

"The game plan is to take him to the robbery office, make a formal confession and then we'll file charges. I won't get into any details of the case."

Authorities said the interviews likely would take several hours since Perry was believed responsible for so many robberies during the last two years.

Perry appeared briefly before a city magistrate, who set bail at \$20,000.

Attorneys said Perry would agree to plead guilty to two aggravated robbery charges for a rec-

ommended 35-year prison sentence. The agreement would clear some 90 robberies from the books in 17 counties in Texas and Louisiana.

"It's going to take some time talking with robbery investigators," police spokesman Rick Hartley said. "Our intent is to clear as many of these cases as possible."

Victims, primarily businessmen who stayed at plush hotels in Texas and western Louisiana, had described him as soft-spoken and polite as he pulled a gun and robbed them.

Authorities say the bandit once called an ambulance for a victim who suffered a heart attack during the robbery and later

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