

Backs force Dallas ISD to fire teachers Students rally against layoffs

DALLAS (AP) — The spirited protest of Dallas high school students Tuesday was the largest demonstration of discontent with school finance reform state lawmakers enacted last spring. Under pressure from the Texas Supreme Court and a 23-year-old suit to equalize school financing, lawmakers shifted property taxes from wealthy school districts to poor ones. The action will take \$47 million in state aid away from the independent School District this year, forcing the firing of 8,500 teachers, officials

“something that is far more complex than the public is willing to admit,” Edwards said.

State Sen. Eddie Bernice Johnson, a Dallas Democrat who is a member of the Senate Education Committee, said she is not surprised by the problems.

“I foresaw the cuts and talked about it on the Senate floor,” Ms. Johnson said. “I said at that time that while we might think we are educating certain students, we are leaving other students without a roof over their heads.”

School finance reform, which shifts money through new tax districts created primarily on county lines, has helped many districts though.

Edgewood Independent School District, the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit that resulted in the new law, has seen improvements.

“It’s getting money our way, but it’s not getting things up to par,” said Daniel Casillas, spokesman for the district in San Antonio’s southwest side. “We’ve had renovations in several of our buildings, like air conditioning in some of our buildings that didn’t have it.”

Ben Gutierrez, Edgewood’s personnel director, said no additional teachers have been hired. “We’re thinking of running an ad

in Dallas,” he said.

The San Elizario Independent School District, which includes the “colonias” outside El Paso, is receiving a 10 percent boost to its \$6 million annual budget.

“We have not opened any glorious new programs or facilities,” said spokeswoman Fran Hatch. “We need class space.”

But the nearby El Paso Independent School district trimmed its approximately \$290 million budget to compensate for about \$5.7 million in lost state aid.

“It was a lot of money to cut, but we made it in areas where people can live with it,” said Gene Burkett, assistant superintendent for finance. “We pretty much kept the instructional supply budgets intact.”

Teacher layoffs are a last resort, even after a tax increase, Burkett said.

The affluent Alamo Heights School District in San Antonio is facing a tax increase to make up for a \$1 million gap in its \$19 million budget due to lost state aid.

“I think the state has not put enough money into education,” said Superintendent Charles Slater. “Their solution is an over-reliance on the property tax. That’s what got us into the problem in the first place.”

It’s not DISD. It’s the whole state’s fault,” Laura Campos, a parent at Skyline High School, during the protest at the Dallas district’s downtown headquarters.

But, while hundreds of other districts are also coping with reductions in state aid, Dallas appears to be the first to lay off teachers on a wide scale.

Superintendent Marvin Edsall said the new state law left district with a choice for its \$11 million budget: layoffs or a 10 percent jump in the property taxes already planned.

The protest resulted from

School district permits state agency takeover

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas Education Agency on Tuesday assumed control of Kendallton Independent School District in Fort Bend County, the first time the agency has used authority granted lawmakers for such a takeover. Education Commissioner L. “Skip” Meno appointed a management team to administer the district, which has a deficit of more than \$180,000 from the 1990-91 year.

The school district also historically has had low scores on the state education skills test, and it has been overseen by a state-appointed master since 1986, Lozano said.

The school district has been rated “academically unaccredited” for a year.

A recent state law allows the education commissioner in such cases to appoint a board of managers and superintendent to oversee district operations.

Kendleton’s new management team includes a three-member board and a new superintendent.

Patsy Menefee, a TEA staff member, will serve as superintendent. She is in a division of TEA that trains local school administrators in the state’s school accreditation process.

Carroll “Butch” Thomas, superintendent of the North Forest Independent School District in Houston, heads the management team as chairman of the board of managers.

He helped North Forest regain full accreditation status after that district encountered problems several years ago.

Other members of the board of managers are Dora Olivo, a lawyer, former early childhood education teacher and member of the Fort Bend Family Health Center; and pharmacist Albert Hopkins, a member of the Region IV Education Service Center Advisory Board and a member of the State Board of Pharmacists.

The group will try to resolve school district’s financial difficulties, and to eventually return district control to local trustees.

Kendleton trustees asked Edsall to make their school district state-operated one after they did not meet an Aug. 15 deadline to get funds to pay off the debt, according to the Education Agency.

“I’m confident that this group of individuals will be able to resolve Kendallton’s financial difficulties,” Meno said in a statement announcing the new management team. “I’m also pleased that Kendallton trustees themselves requested this action by the agency. We look forward to working with the board toward a goal of allowing them to resume administration of the district as soon as possible.”

TEA spokesman Joey Lozano said the school district has a low property tax collection rate and that a lower-than-expected student count caused the school district to get less state aid than it anticipated.

Minister admits to sex scandal

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A former member of Marvin Gorman’s church said Tuesday that the fundamentalist preacher accused her of being a lesbian, and her sex with a man would “cure” her and convert her into sex.

“He said part of my problem was the fact that I did not have a man in my life, that I had never had sex with a man, and that if I ever had sex with a man I would not want to be a lesbian,” Gail McDaniel of the report testified.

McDaniel testified under threat of contempt in Gorman’s \$90 million defamation suit against fellow evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, another minister expelled from the Assemblies of God after a sex scandal.

Gorman claims that Swaggart and others set out

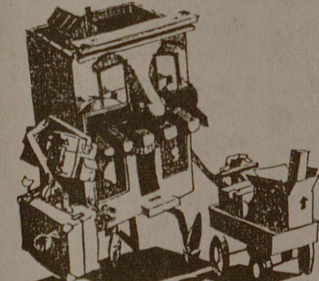
to ruin Marvin Gorman Ministries after running him out of First Assembly of God in New Orleans with exaggerated tales of sex.

He testified that he only had incomplete sex with one woman, Lynda Savage, and a session of heavy petting with Lynnette Goux, whose youngest sister McDaniel was accused of seducing.

However, he also confessed to overly emphatic embraces with two other women, according to a statement from a psychologist who counsels preachers for the Assemblies of God.

Dr. Richard Dobbins said he confronted Gorman in 1986 with a list of six women’s names, and Gorman acknowledged unministerial behavior with two of them, in addition to Savage and Goux.

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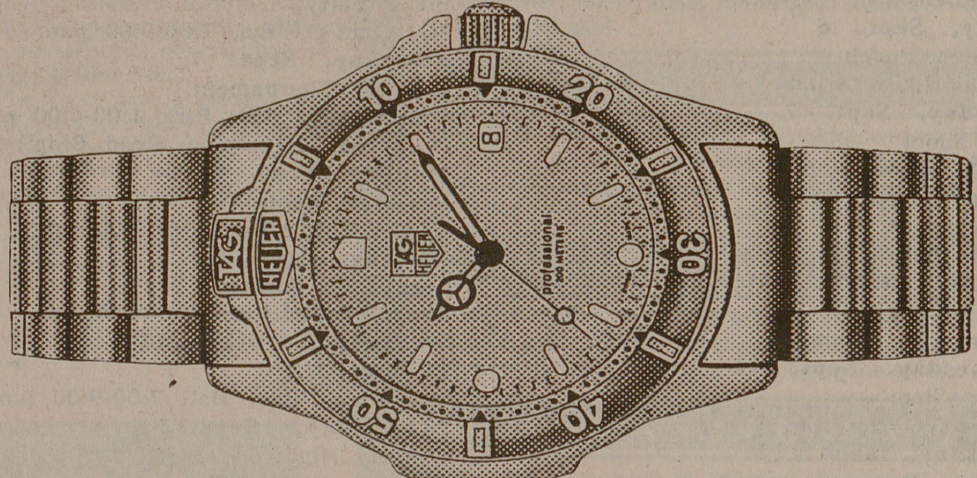
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