

Board to vote on inmate releases

Prison officials contemplate relief for overcrowding in jails

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas prison officials are scheduled to decide Friday whether to use a state law to allow the early release of about 2,900 inmates over the next two months.

The decision, contemplated to help relieve county jails with a backlog of about 14,000 inmates sentenced to state prison, was postponed in March.

Chairman Selden Hale of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice said then that the delay was needed because of "hysteria" over reports about the release of offenders.

But this month may be no better. Hale, of Amarillo, told the Austin American-Statesman that political pressures could make board members vote against invoking the Prison Management Act.

The act is meant to avoid a shutdown of state prisons, triggered when the inmate population exceeds a court-established limit of 95 percent of capacity.

At that point, prison officials inform the attorney general that they no longer can accept inmates from county jails. The prison population last week was at 94.4 percent of capacity.

The act allows the criminal justice board to selectively release inmates, choosing non-violent prisoners first and ensuring that they are supervised by parole officers after release. Their departure makes room for violent convicts backlogged in county jails.

Inmates convicted of certain violent or

drug-related crimes aren't eligible for release under the act. Neither are inmates whose sentences are longer than 10 years, or who have exhibited violent behavior while behind bars.

Parole officials also are prohibited from approving any inmate deemed a likely threat to public safety.

"We discussed previously, if they were to invoke the act, that it did not by any means mean wholesale releases," Gov. Ann Richards said Monday. "It did not mean bringing so many people out into the community that they could not be absorbed. It meant an opportunity for a systematic release."

Richards said she didn't know whether the board would invoke the Prison Management Act. But she added, "Frankly, if they do, it will be in a well-managed fashion."

But a number of people are worried that those released will just violate the law again.

"The Prison Management Act should be repealed. If they're only releasing non-violent offenders, why is it that people who have only been out of jail three days commit heinous crimes?" asked Richard Collins, spokesman for Associated Texans Against Crime.

Prison board members stress that all the inmates who would be released early already have been approved for parole.

"All we're doing is advancing that parole date, in some cases by weeks and in some cases by months," Hale said.

There are 48,377 state inmates in prison, in addition to those in county jails awaiting transfer.

In the past seven months, the state has released an average of 588 inmates a week. To keep up with the prisoners coming from county jails, it would need to release 750 a week.

Looking ahead to Friday's meeting, Hale sighs.

"I'm like the messenger coming to report to the king about the battle being lost," he said. "I don't have any good answers. All my replies are bad."

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BILLY MORAN/The Battalion

Shining Old Sully

Steve O'Neil, Chris Faulkner and John Frank, outfit freshmen scrub down Sul Ross on Friday morning.

Republicans consider return of Nixon at GOP convention

HOUSTON (AP) — Republican National Convention planners say it may be time to bring back the charisma of former President Richard Nixon at this summer's nominating party at the Astrodome.

"He's a very wise elder statesman," Bush campaign chairman Robert Mosbacher Sr. said. "I don't think of him as a liability."

Nixon, 79, became the first president in U.S. history to resign in 1974 in the wake of the Watergate scandal.

He has been absent from the convention scene since 1972 when he was nominated for a second term.

But Maida Pearson and other Republican officials say the wounds have healed and it's time to recognize Nixon for his accomplishments and not for the break-in that led to the downfall of an administration.

"I have every hope that he will be there (in Houston)," Pearson, vice-chairwoman of the GOP Committee on Arrangements, told The Houston Post.

The committee is the wing of the Republican National Convention overseeing plans for the Aug. 17-20 convention at the Astrodome.

"I'm 100 percent for it (inviting Nixon)," Jean Sul-

livan, an RNC member from Alabama, said.

"I think he's coming out of retirement more and more all the time. And I'm glad to see it. I loved the man. I wept two days when he resigned."

Analysts say it's a politically sticky situation for Bush, who owes a great deal of his political career to Nixon, who kicked off Bush's successful run for a Houston congressional seat in 1966. And Nixon named Bush U.S. representative to the United Nations and then chairman of the RNC.

While former presidents Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford each could be considered as a keynote convention speaker, Rice University political scientist Bob Stein said he would be surprised if Nixon were invited.

"It's hard to imagine that you're going to see much of Richard Nixon in very visible way," Stein said. "I'd find he's still a liability and more so if there's a close election."

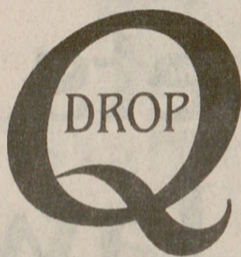
Francis Loewenheim, a Rice historian, agreed, saying injecting Watergate memories could be detrimental to the party.

"What would happen is they (the media) would start playing tapes of the hearings and of his resignation speech," Loewenheim said.

"I think they're going to be very cautious about anything that will add controversy and add the memory of how the part got into a perilous position," he said.



Nixon



Deadline for students to Q-drop is today

Today is the last day for graduate and undergraduate students to drop courses with no penalty and receive a Q grade on their transcripts (Q-drop). Colleges have limits on the number of Q-drops students can have during their academic career.

For more information on Q-drop limits and procedures contact your advisor or your department office.

Crime Stoppers

Assailant attacks female at student center Friday

On Friday, March 13 at 6:20 a.m. a female student was sleeping on one of the couches in the St. Mary's student center on the corner of Church and Nagle Streets in College Station. The student was startled awake when an attacker came from behind her, grabbed her around the neck, held a knife to her throat, then pulled her blanket over her head.

The victim states that she briefly struggled with her assailant until he threatened to kill her, then he ordered her to disrobe, and assaulted her. After the assault, the assailant forced her into a restroom and then fled from the building.

Because the victim was startled by the sudden attack and

had her face covered throughout the ordeal, she could only describe her attacker as a black male. College Station Police Detectives believe the suspect may live or work in the neighborhood of the Student Center and was probably walking through the area at the time.

The College Station Police Department and Crime Stoppers need your help to identify the person responsible for this sexual assault. If you have information, call Crime Stoppers at 775-TIPS.

Crime Stoppers also pays cash for information on any felony crime or the location of any fugitive. Call Brazos County Crime Stoppers today at 775-TIPS.

The Battalion

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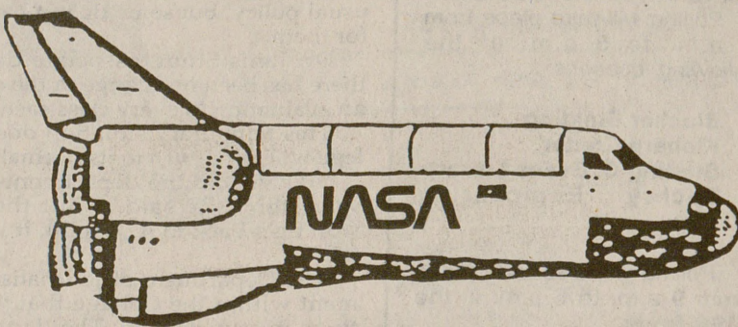
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FREE SPRING ALLERGY SKIN TESTING

Ages 18 and older

Individuals with spring allergy symptoms to screen for upcoming research studies.

IMPETIGO STUDY

Individuals of any age with symptoms of impetigo (bacterial infection of the skin) to participate in an investigational drug research study using a cream with drug in it. \$150 for those chosen and completing the study.

TENSION HEADACHE?

Individuals with moderate to severe Tension Headaches wanted to participate in a 4-hour headache relief research study with an investigational medication in tablet form. Flexible hours. \$75 incentive for individuals who are chosen and complete the study. Daily, till 6:30 776-0400.

ASTHMA STUDY

WANTED: Individuals, age 12-65, with mild to moderate asthma to participate in a clinical research study for 6 weeks with an investigational medication in inhaler form. Individuals must be using inhaled steroids and bronchodilators daily to qualify. \$400 incentive paid to those completing the study.

SKIN INFECTION STUDY

Individuals age 13 and older wanted to participate in a research study for bacterial skin infections such as: infected wounds, infected burns, boils, infected hair follicles, impetigo, infected ingrown toenails and others. Investigational oral antibiotic in capsule form. \$100 incentive for those chosen who complete the study.

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