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Ratliff provides fallback system

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock on Tuesday endorsed an education finance proposal, calling it a "fail-safe" measure to keep the courts from shutting down Texas schools.



Bullock

Bullock said the plan by Sen. Bill Ratliff, R-Mount Pleasant, provides a fallback provision in the event that one component — a constitutional amendment — is rejected.

"There is a backup system that would not require a constitutional amendment. We have to have

some type of a fail-safe mechanism to make sure that our schools do not close in September, and this would provide that," Bullock said.

Ratliff, new chairman of the Senate Education Committee, said, "I've been around school finance long enough not to call anything fail-safe, but it's as fail-safe as I know how to design one."

Ratliff said his plan would be approved by his committee and before the full Senate next week.

If approved by the Senate, it would go to the House where Republicans, during a pre-Christmas special legislative session, blocked a school finance plan favored by Bullock and Gov. Ann Richards.

The Texas Supreme Court has ordered the Legislature to come up with a finance plan by June 1.

Earlier court decisions declared

the state's funding system unconstitutional because it allowed disparities in funding between property-rich and property-poor school districts.

To address that, the Legislature implemented a system that redistributes some local property tax money among school districts within single or multi-county education districts, or CEDs.

But the Supreme Court has said that system violates the state constitution by imposing a statewide property tax, and by levying a property tax without voter approval.

Ratliff's proposed constitutional amendment essentially would make this system legal. Like any proposed change to the state constitution,

it would require approval of two-thirds of the Legislature and

voters statewide.

If the amendment is rejected, either by lawmakers or voters, Ratliff's plan would have the voters in each county education district decide whether to authorize the CED tax.

If county voters didn't authorize the tax, school districts within that CED would be limited to the state guarantee of \$3,470 per-student spending level, Ratliff said.

But Ratliff conceded that while he is attacking the issue of equalizing funding, the state is still shortchanging overall funding for public schools.

"All we're doing... is sharing the pain," he said.

Education officials have said schools will need an additional \$958 million in the next two-year budget cycle to cover the cost of enrollment growth.

Heart-assist recipient dies from stroke

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — Mike Templeton, the longest-surviving recipient of a portable heart-assist device, died Tuesday of a stroke, Texas Heart Institute officials said.

Templeton, 34, had suffered from cardiomyopathy, a slow deterioration and dilation of the heart.

Physicians said Thursday that strokes are a common occurrence among patients with cardiomyopathy.

Templeton, from Humble, a suburb northeast of Houston, had been awaiting a heart transplant. He had lived the last 16 months with the aid of a battery-powered left ventricular assist device, making him the longest-surviving recipient of the HeartMate device.

"While living at the hospital for the past 16 months, Mike had become part of the extended family of St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital and the Texas Heart Institute," said Dr. O. Howard Frazier, chief of cardiopulmonary transplantation at the institute and one of Templeton's physicians. "His death is a great personal loss to all of us."

Physicians said a preliminary look at the device showed it had performed well.

Shortly after he received the pump in a Sept. 3, 1991, operation, Templeton said he felt so good he wasn't looking forward to a heart transplant.

"When I felt terrible, making a decision to have this (heart transplant surgery) was a lot easier than when I'm feeling good and

they say I have to have a transplant," Templeton said.

Templeton was only the second of five recipients of the device. The first recipient, Larry Heinsohn, 52, of Shreveport, La., died two weeks after it was implanted on May 9, 1991.

Physicians said at the time that Heinsohn's death was unrelated to the device because other organs had deteriorated during his illness.

After 13 months in the hospital, Templeton was permitted to leave the hospital on day trips last September after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave its approval for the HeartMate device.

The electric pump, which costs between \$40,000 and \$50,000, is manufactured by Thermo CardioSystems Inc. of Woburn, Mass. Victor Poirier, president of the company and developer of the pump, said the device was created

after some 25 years and \$50 million worth of research.

The titanium pump is 4 inches in diameter and 1 1/2 inches thick and weighs about 2 pounds.

It is implanted in the abdomen and a tube connects it to the left ventricle, the main chamber of the heart. The battery pack is carried in a shoulder holster to make the device portable.

Previous devices, that were air-driven, had to be connected to a large console, limiting a patient's movements.

Templeton said when he was first approached about having the device he "was apprehensive. It was all new. You don't know exactly what it was." But he said he became convinced to get it "when they told me I wasn't going to make it."

Doctors said Templeton probably would not have lived a week without the device.

Construction

Continued from Page 2

mated to complete it.

In addition to weather problems, Williams said train scheduling might also contribute to further delays because crews would have to stop to allow trains to pass.

The department will be providing the traffic control necessary to continue the project.

"We are using state forces (employees) to go and close down lanes," Williams said. "The state forces are used to place the various traffic control devices and signs for lane closures."

Williams said the railroad was "improving the tracks for vehicular traffic."

Motorists are advised to be on the alert for flagmen at the crossing and to drive slowly through the project. Off-campus bus routes will not be affected.

Union Pacific Railroad could not be reached for comment.

Stark

Continued from Page 1

1985. He also received the Distinguished Achievement Award for Individual Student Relationships from the Texas A&M Association of Former Students.

Stark is survived by his wife, Jean, and two children, John and Sally. A grandson, Drew McGe-

hee, currently serves as vice president of the MSC Council.

The cause of death was not available.

Services will be 2 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20 at the A&M United Methodist Church in College Station. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Stark Tribute Fund in care of the MSC Director's Office, P.O. Box J-1, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77844.

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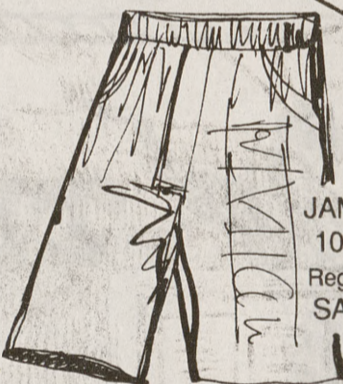
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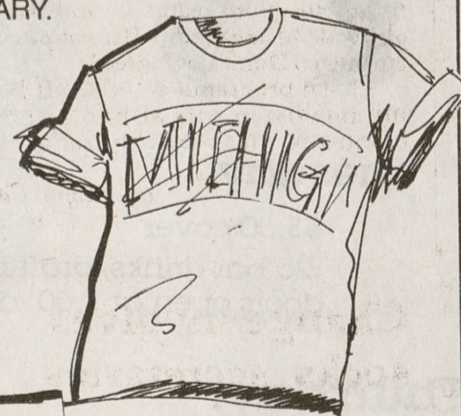
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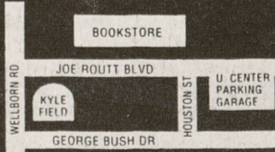
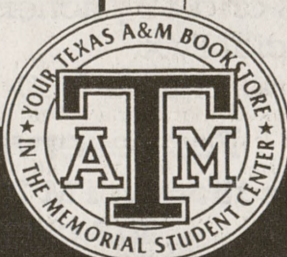
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