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State News Briefs

Judge restrains parents from sons

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A judge has granted a temporary restraining order keeping a divorced couple away from two teen-age brothers who want to be permanently separated from their parents.

State District Judge Martha Tanner signed an order Monday preventing the couple from contacting their sons pending a court hearing Friday on a separation lawsuit the teens filed.

The 14- and 15-year-old brothers want the court to take custody rights away from both parents, not allow visitation and force child support payments for whoever becomes their guardian.

"I wish it didn't have to come to this, but no one was helping us out," the 15-year-old was quoted as saying in Tuesday's San Antonio Express-News. "It was scary at first, but I am not going to run back to all the hurt."

Law would make weight bias illegal

AUSTIN (AP) — It would be illegal for an employer to discriminate against workers because of their weight under a bill by a state lawmaker.

The measure by Rep. Sherri Greenberg, D-Austin, was prompted by an aide, Linda Hymans, who says she has encountered bias because of her size in the past.

Hymans said that corporate bosses at a previous job in New York gave her excellent performance reviews but denied her promotions. She blamed her weight, which was then almost 300 pounds, and filed a complaint with the business's human resources department.

"Suddenly I had two (promotion) offers," said Hymans, 39. She said she believed the company wanted to avoid potential problems and noted, "Discrimi-

nation of any kind is always frowned upon."

Hymans subsequently enrolled at the University of Texas and finished a bachelor's degree in government, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

Wealthy Texans play lottery most

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas comptroller's office says a study released Tuesday shows the Texas Lottery does not prey on the poor.

Individuals with the lowest level of education and lowest incomes were the least likely to play the lottery's instant-win scratch card games and Lotto Texas, according to a demographic survey conducted by the Center for Public Policy at the University of Houston.

The most frequent Texas Lottery players earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000 a year, while those who play the least earn less than \$10,000 a year, according to the study.

AG follows up on open law promises

HOUSTON (AP) — The Texas attorney general's office is prosecuting two allegations of violations of the state's open meetings and open records laws in what a new special enforcer said marks a fresh approach for the office.

"The fact that there is a policy of enforcement is a good bit different," Gary Bledsoe, special assistant attorney general, said. "It's not unprecedented but, as far as the regular enforcement activity, it is indeed a major change."

Bledsoe said he is pursuing misdemeanor criminal charges against several Bee County commissioners for an alleged violation of the state's Open Meetings Act. He also is pursuing a civil lawsuit involving the city of Dallas' refusal to release police records.

Bill to stiffen penalty for child murderers

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Terri Jeffers had to listen while her ex-husband fatally shot their 3-year-old son in 1988 during a heated argument over the couple's failed marriage.

The pain and nightmares remain, but she hopes to keep the same terror from happening to someone else.

Jeffers gave testimony before the Senate Criminal Justice Committee Tuesday in favor of a bill that would make killing a child under 6 years old a capital crime, punishable by death.

The committee voted 6-0 to forward the measure on to the full Senate for consideration.

"I think that for the type of violence that is being perpetrated towards these children, there ought to be a stiffer penalty," said Jeffers, a resident of Houston. "If they are going to take these children and brutally murder them, why should their life be more precious than that of the child?"

Jeffers played an eerie phone recording during which her ex-husband, James Ward, ignored her shrieking pleas and fired two shots, one into the head of their son, Danny, and the other into his own.

The boy died instantly, but Ward's suicide attempt failed. After pleading insanity, Ward was sentenced to life in prison. He is up for parole in 10 more years, Jeffers said.

"He (Ward) said ... 'If I stay in prison, I will get a college education and get a desk job when I get out,'" Jeffers said. "I didn't really think the system was broke until it happened to me."

The bill by Sen. Buster Brown, R-Lake Jackson, was opposed by John Boston, executive director of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association.

Boston, whose group ardently opposes the death penalty in any case, said life without parole would be better punishment because it forces the defendant to languish in prison.

Sixteen-car collision Man dies in rush-hour

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — One man was killed in a series of rush-hour wrecks Tuesday involving 16 or more vehicles on a highway shrouded by smoke and ground fog, authorities said.

The accidents were reported about 6:45 a.m. on U.S. 290 near Hockley, about 30 miles northwest of Houston, said Mike Cox, spokesman for the Texas Department of Public Safety.

At least three 18-wheelers were involved, Department of Public Safety Sgt. Keith Barbier said.

One man was killed in the accident when his car was crushed between two trucks, Barbier said.

Cox identified the victim as Raymond Simon, 54, of Waller, Texas.

The accidents apparently were sparked when drivers could not see through fog and heavy smoke from a roadside fire, officials said.

Highway 290, a major link between Houston and Austin, was shut for several hours in both directions. Wreckage from the crashes was scattered across all four highway lanes.

"I started hearing all sorts of crashes, commotion, tires squealing," said Malcolm Green, who was involved in the accident. "You couldn't see anything, and you were deathly afraid to try to see if you could go help anybody."

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