

State legislature completes 140-day session

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — The Legislature wrapped up its 1993 regular session Monday.

In their 140-day bout of lawmaking, legislators voted to allow hunting in parks but not carrying of handguns. They adopted a bigger budget but approved no tax increase.

They wrote a school finance reform plan. Twice.

And they debated that age-old question: does a hog farm smell like money or, well, just pigs?

From her perspective, Gov. Ann Richards was pleased with the outcome. "I think we've had an extraordinarily successful session," she said. "I don't think anyone can doubt that."

Here's a look at some of the major — and minor — actions of the 1993 Texas Legislature:

→ **SCHOOL FINANCE:**

For a third time, Texas Supreme Court had ruled against the school funding system. So lawmakers early in the session approved a third school finance proposal, the now-infamous "Robin Hood" share-the-wealth plan to shift \$400 million from rich to poor school districts.

On May 1, voters gave their opinion — No way.

In a matter of days, the Legislature came up with a new idea. A multiple-choice plan gives 109 rich districts five options for sharing — from consolidation to writing checks to the state.

Sen. Bill Ratliff, R-Mount Pleasant, helped write it and concluded: "This comes as close as humanly possible to meeting the court's test."

→ **BUDGET:**

After suffering through repeated massive shortfalls and prolonged tax-and-spend battles, state leaders this year issued a pre-session decree: no new taxes.

The Legislature then wrote a two-year budget that boosts spending by 11.4 percent — \$7.18 billion — for a 1994-95 total of \$70.1 billion. Only a few fees went up.

Sen. John Montford, D-Lubbock, a key budget writer, said the spending plan

isn't lavish. "A Chevrolet with no white walls," he called it.

Added Richards: "We held the line on money, and yet we have been able to fund all of these essentials."

→ **GUN BATTLES:**

Echoing the state's Wild West image, lawmakers exchanged fire — over and over — over guns.

Lawmakers took a shot at legalizing the carrying of handguns. Calling it an invitation for more violence, the governor fired back with a veto threat.

Lawmakers reloaded, saying they would settle for giving voters a shot at the question. Their final plan: a non-binding referendum on Nov. 2 in which voters could express their opinions.

But Richards still pledged a veto, calling the referendum bill "nothing more than game playing by a few legislators who appear intent on embarrassing this great state as a place where gun-toting vigilantes roam the streets."

Legislative gunfire wasn't confined to that issue.

Lawmakers also endorsed expanded hunting in state parks. "There are thousands and thousands of people in this state, fathers and sons, that do not have a place to hunt," said Rep. Allen Hightower, D-Huntsville.

Richards, an avid hunter, said that bill would become law.

→ **ENVIRONMENT:**

Big battles were fought over the environment.

Under one bill, pumping from the Edwards Aquifer would be regulated by a permit system to protect endangered species. The underground aquifer, which extends for 176 miles under Central Texas counties, is the sole source of drinking water for San Antonio.

Lawmakers endorsed a compact with two New England states for disposal of their low-level radioactive waste. Vermont and Maine must pay Texas \$25 million each to use the Hudspeth County dump, and backers said the deal will keep bigger states from horning in.

Another bill would allow the Railroad Commission to regulate storage of hazardous materials in salt domes.

Hours were spent debating a bill to exempt agricultural operations from most air pollution control requirements, unless it was shown that odors caused injuries or a public health hazard.

Backers said the bill was needed because livestock operations are naturally smelly and air control regulations of agriculture do little to protect the environment. Opponents said it would encourage large dairy operators and feedlots to enter Texas without regard to location.

The bill died after senators added a provision that would have allowed lawsuits if the "quality of life" were damaged.

→ **CRIME:**

A major anti-crime push was a centerpiece of the session.

Lawmakers voted to create a system of 22,000 new "state jail" beds for nonviolent offenders, build 10,000 new prison beds and fund 7,000 prison beds for substance abuse treatment.

They overhauled the state's code of criminal laws, voting to double the prison time of violent criminals. Gay rights activists urged a gubernatorial veto, however, because the bill keeps the state's century-old law banning sodomy between same-sex couples.

Also approved was anti-stalking legislation and 40-year minimum sentences for capital murderers who don't receive the death penalty.

Lawmakers passed a hate crimes measure to toughen penalties in offenses motivated by prejudice and abolish probation in hate-motivated murders.

Under a drunken driving measure, motorists who refuse or fail a breath or blood test could have their drivers' licenses revoked.

And lawmakers decided to extend the death penalty to those who murder children under the age of six and to double penalties for drug offenses committed near children.

→ **ETHICS:**

The current state ethics law was passed only minutes before the clock struck midnight and ended the 1993 Legislature. That sparked criticism that lawmakers hadn't even gotten a chance to

read the bill.

They had a full 140 days this year to make changes.

But while they debated proposals to limit campaign contributions, limit terms for officeholders and prohibit legislators from becoming lobbyists, the clock won again.

An ethics reform bill died without a final vote when the Legislature adjourned.

→ **HIGHER EDUCATION:**

The South Texas Initiative was adopted, aimed at increasing higher education opportunities and improving colleges and universities in the region.

A \$460 million package was approved for expanding undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs, and for building and expanding campuses and facilities.

The initiative is a response to a 1987 lawsuit that contends border area residents have been denied equal access to higher education. Lawmakers said South Texas has been receiving about \$43 per person for higher education, compared with \$103 per person for other parts of the state.

→ **BUSINESS:**

Business bills were a booming business. Passed early in the session and signed by Richards into law were two bills making it harder for consumers to recover damages from companies by taking them to court.

One bill protects tobacco companies from liability because their products would be classified among those consumers know to be unsafe. And in lawsuits alleging that products had design defects, those suing must prove that a safer alternative design existed when the product was made.

The second bill made it more difficult for people in other countries who claim injuries from a product with some Texas connection to file suit here.

Lawmakers debated until the final hours over legislation continuing the Public Utility Commission.

Consumer outcry rose up over a last-minute provision that would have allowed telephone and electric companies to charge customers for "phantom" taxes

they don't actually pay. Lawmakers decided Monday afternoon to simply continue the agency as is for the next two years and study related issues.

A key insurance bill was approved to extend the life of the State Board of Insurance, which regulates the state's \$35 billion per year insurance industry. It also allowed industry organizations to provide the data regulators use to determine insurance rates under strict regulatory oversight by the insurance commissioner.

→ **HEALTH CARE:**

Legislation won approval that was designed to make health insurance more available and affordable for small businesses employing three to 50 people.

Also passed was a bill to provide for immunizations of children against preventable diseases.

→ **AND...**

Three years after a Houston woman stood trial for entering a men's room at a crowded concert in 1990, lawmakers enacted a "potty parity" bill.

Stadiums, arenas or any facility where "the public congregates" would have to provide twice the number of women's restrooms as men's. The requirement would apply only to facilities either built or renovated after this year.

Sen. Gonzalo Barrientos, D-Austin, called it "bathroom equity" and good news for women.

Another — albeit smaller — segment of the population got some good news, too. Professional students, "slackers," some called them.

Sen. Carl Parker, D-Port Arthur, took aim at students who seem to stay in school forever. He proposed charging out-of-state tuition to undergraduates who accumulate more than 158 hours of credit, nearly a sevenfold hike.

His anti-slacker bill was aimed at "those who just use college for recreational purposes," he said, those subsidized by taxpayers "in an effort to become a great conversationalist."

But the slackers won. They didn't mobilize in a sudden fit of energy, though. The House just never got around to considering it.

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Khmer Rouge attacks again in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Khmer Rouge guerrillas ambushed a U.N. convoy Monday, killing a peacekeeper and wounding five others. It was the second significant attack following largely peaceful elections that ended Friday.

The guerrillas earlier fired at French troops, killed two Cambodians and torched houses during a raid Sunday on a village market.

Despite vows to disrupt the election, the Khmer Rouge had abstained from serious violence during the voting. Almost 90 percent of Cambodia's 4.7 million voters cast ballots, including hundreds of guerrillas.

On Sunday, the guerrillas' radio station condemned the election and the U.N. mission and said they would keep on fighting.

But a party seeking reconciliation with the guerrillas was leading in the vote count.

U.N. spokesman Eric Falt said Monday that with 43 percent of the vote counted, unofficial results showed the major opposition party, FUNCINPEC, leading by a small margin.

The party, aligned with Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's most respected leader, had 36.7 percent of the vote compared with 35.3 percent for the ruling Cambodian People's Party. Final results were expected later this week.

The six-day election was for a 120-member assembly that is to adopt a constitution within three months, then form a government.

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Clinton

Continued from Page 1

The president, in a series of Memorial Day events designed to help him improve his standing with the military, earlier vowed in remarks at Arlington National Cemetery that he would not put U.S. troops in harm's way without a "clear mission, the means and the support they need to win."

"We resolve to keep America free, strong and proud ... to be ever vigilant against any foe that could endanger us," he said at the cemetery.

The president received a standing ovation from the crowd of about 4,000 at the cemetery ceremony, and was also warmly received at an earlier White House celebration with veterans groups. But it was a tougher task at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as he faced the ghosts

Bangkok

COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS. A LOCAL UNDERCOVER COP IS BORED OUT OF HIS MIND.

THIS TOWN IS DEAD!! WHERE'S ALL THE ACTION?

HEY BUDDY - CAN I ASK YOU A QUESTION?

IF THIS IS ABOUT THAT GREEN BEER TRUCK THEN I AIN'T ANSWERIN' SQUAT WITHOUT MY LAWYER PRESENT!!

Angus... The Series

LET'S SEE - STRONG DUCKBILL, SEXY WEBFEET, AND A BEAVER TAIL. THAT MUST MAKE ME A REMARKABLY HANDSOME PLADYPUS.

EITHER THAT OR THE RESULT OF DONALD DUCK HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH BUSY BEAVER.

AGGIE MAN

BIRTH OF AGGIE MAN

IN OUR LAST EPISODE, EDWARD DIMWITT, A MILD MANNERED COLLEGE STUDENT, HAD BEEN BITTEN BY A RADIO-ACTIVE MASCOT, AND WAS ABOUT TO GET HIT BY A BUS. WILL OUR HERO-TO-BE ESCAPE THIS FATE?

ARE YOU OK? YOU JUST GOT BIT BY A BUS!

DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING?

YEAH F... I'M EDWARD KING GIL PROTECTOR OF AGGIE MAN AND HIS TRADITIONS!

UHH?? E KING GIL EDWARD KING GIL

NOPE

WHAT A MORON

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of his youth.

Clinton laid a large floral wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns monument, then stood at attention, his hand over his heart, for the playing of "taps." The tomb commemorates U.S. soldiers from various wars whose remains could not be identified.

His motorcade arrived in the cemetery to a 21-gun salute.

Clinton renewed his pledge that his administration would do what it could "to provide answers" in accounting for all prisoners of the Vietnam War and those missing in action.

"We come together this morning to honor those who died that we might live in freedom," he said.

"We put aside our differences to better reflect on what unites us," he said. A chief political rival, Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., also participated in the ceremony.

Earlier today, Clinton told a group of World War II veterans in an East Room ceremony:

"This is your house. You have paid the price for it and those you represent make the fact that it's still standing possible." He spoke as he unveiled commemorative stamps and coins.

"Our country must remember and honor the men who defended democracy and defeated aggression," he said. "We learned from those early defeats in World War II that we must remain vigilant and always prepared to resist future aggression, and that the nations dedicated to freedom must stand together."

He declined comment when asked about his efforts to avoid the Vietnam War or plans by veterans to protest his appearance at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial later in the day. But in a newspaper interview published Sunday he declared "I can't run away."

Clinton's appearance at the black marble wall, which serves as a stark reminder of the thousands of lives lost and a generation torn apart over the Vietnam War, was a risky political move for an already battered president.

Presidents federal t smoking to be livin be inhaling retired Social sec which is working; den will be When your ass ving for y ment to grandchild and hard as good a