

Richland High students agree school's Rebel flag offensive

The Associated Press

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS — After years of denying the right to wave the Rebel flag as a symbol of school spirit, some Richland High students are ready for a truce.

Many students said they now recognize that the symbol they considered a part of school spirit and pride might be a source of pain and resentment to others.

The students have gotten rid of symbols that once identified the school with the Confederacy. Instead, they have constructed a banner of blue and gray with the name Rebel on it. They think this will soon foster the same school pride as its predecessor.

However, the school's Johnny Rebel mascot will still be on football fields at all times. He will still wear the uniform of a Confederate officer, but he won't be carrying the Confederate battle flag.

"The general consensus was that we live in a time where racism is getting out of hand, there's too much violence and segregation," said Rick Mauderer, faculty sponsor of the school's student council.

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In November 1990, Southwest High School in Fort Worth changed its name from the Rebels to the Raiders after school trustees ordered the change.

A group of students — the student council, football team and several spirit organizers — spearheaded the effort at Richland High and went to the school officials and asked that the new banner be adopted.

"I know a great deal of people who have been offended by the flag and now those people can go to Richland and participate in school activities comfortably," said senior cheerleader Tanya Scoggins.

"Wherever we went there had been problems. That's been a history thing," Principal Annette Keller said. "They (the students) wanted a banner that can fly at every game without a problem. They didn't want to start the new year out with anything negative."

Others said the new banner won't change the habits of fans who bring the flag to games.

"I think that it is a strong blow against our school to take away our symbol of pride and how we fight to the end," said junior Charles Davis. "People will still wave the Rebel flag in the stands and we will still be the Richland Rebels."

Economy doing better, officials say

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The economy is sputtering along so far this year at a substantially weaker growth rate than in 1992, and the prospect, according to economists, is for only mild improvement.

The gross domestic product — the sum of all goods and services produced in the United States — advanced a lackluster 1.8 percent in the April-June period to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of \$5.1 trillion, the Commerce Department said Tuesday.

That followed a barely perceptible 0.8 percent gain in the first quarter.

The increases were slightly better than what the department reported a month ago — 1.6 percent in the second quarter and 0.7 percent in the first.

But they're still far below what analysts were looking for when the year began, and they cast doubt on the strength of the momentum going into the second half of the year.

"Our forecast for the second half is 2.7 percent. ... It's our forecast and I'll live and die by it but I'm beginning to feel a lot less comfortable," said economist Martin Regalia of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

"It's becoming a hope as much as a forecast."

The Clinton administration, too, is scaling back its projections.

Laura Tyson, the chairwoman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, has said that the administration could reduce its 1993 growth forecast from 3.1 percent to as low as 2.1 percent when it releases its midyear economic review on Wednesday.

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Haiti receives new prime minister

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Far from this destitute homeland, Robert Malval, a 50-year old businessman, was installed Monday as Haitian prime minister, promising to work for national reconciliation and the restoration of democracy.

With deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide looking on approvingly, Malval assumed his new duties with a stark reference to the forces in Haiti who may try to block the country's democratic rebirth.

"You may kill us but you will never kill the dream of the people of Haiti to get their freedom," Malval said.

He is scheduled to return to Haiti on Tuesday.

The setting was a sweltering, high-ceilinged second floor reception room at the Haitian Embassy, where about 100 diplomats and other dignitaries gathered for the minute ceremony.

The Clinton administration was represented by the top State Department official for Latin America, Alexander Watson.

Malval was not sworn in but was "installed," consistent with Haitian tradition.

The transfer of power occurred when Malval took possession of a weighty "dossier" from Rene Preval, who served as Aristide's prime minister during his seven-month presidency.

Malval insisted that the installation ceremony take place in Washington because he wanted Aristide to preside.

It was 23 months ago that the day Monday that Aristide was ousted in an army-led coup.

As part of an agreement worked out by international mediators on July 3, Aristide himself will take charge of the country on Oct. 30.

"Today is a sign that the return to democracy will become a reality," said Aristide, who personally chose Malval to head the interim

government in Haiti.

Malval, who has studied in Miami and Paris, was interrupted repeatedly by applause during his 20-minute remarks, delivered mostly in French.

"My government has one goal — restore democracy as of today," he said. "My government has one dream — to reconcile the country with itself."

The upbeat mood of the ceremony, which featured champagne toasts, contrasted sharply with the economic devastation that has occurred in Haiti over the past two years, partly as a result of international sanctions designed to pressure the coup leaders to allow democracy to be reinstated.

Another major problem has been political repression. The Inter-American Human Rights Commission said in a statement Friday that 300,000 Haitians have been driven into hiding and 1,500 have been killed since Aristide's ouster in 1991.

Bond amendment would finance housing program

The Associated Press

AUSTIN — Texas Agriculture Commissioner Rick Perry and Land Commissioner Garry Mauro asked voters Tuesday to support bond amendments which would finance agricultural businesses and a veterans housing program.

Sixteen proposed constitutional amendments, including four bond issues, will be before voters Nov. 2.

Perry is trying to garner votes for Proposition 16, which would bring to \$100 million the bond funding to the Texas Agricultural Finance Authority.

The program, first approved in 1989 with \$25 million, could create up to 14,000 jobs with the additional funds, Perry said.

So far, TAFE has granted loans to 34 companies and created 4,700 jobs, he said.

"Some look at some of these programs as handouts. This is one that can stand on its own feet," Perry said.

"It hasn't cost the taxpayers of the state of Texas one dime."

Perry said he has more than 300 applications from businesses which process Texas agricultural items, such as food and clothing, pending the outcome of the vote.

The program generates revenue for the fund as loans are repaid, Perry said.

Judge blocks districts from spending surplus funds

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — A judge has ordered the state's 188 county education districts not to spend surplus money pending a Sept. 13 hearing on a lawsuit by two Bexar County school districts.

State District Judge Scott McCown in Austin granted a temporary restraining order Monday after the North East and Somerset school districts in Bexar County sued over the state's proposed distribution of \$12.4 million in surplus taxes collected in the county.

McCown extended his ruling to all county education districts.

"We ought to do it the same way statewide," the judge said.

In Bexar County, the order keeps money in the coffers of the Bexar County Education District, which was to dissolve at midnight Tuesday, until next month's hearing.

Richard Middleton, superintendent of the North East district, said the ruling was a "partial victory."

The district sued to block Texas Education Commissioner Lionel "Skip" Meno's plan for redistributing tax money collected over a two-year period by the Bexar education district.

Under the commissioner's plan, North East would have received \$777,571 and Somerset would owe the state \$634. Under Senate Bill 351, which created the county education districts two years ago, North East would receive \$3.8 million and Somerset would receive \$40,405.

Kevin O'Hanlon, an attorney representing the Texas Education Agency, said Bexar County is unusual in that it had raised such a large surplus.

"They raised more than they should have raised," O'Hanlon said.

The Bexar education district levied an additional tax that was equally distributed to its member school districts as part of a school equalization plan approved two years ago by the Legislature.

But that system was declared unconstitutional, and a state law-makers approved a new plan this spring to equalize funding between property-rich and property-poor school districts.

The Bexar education district board, representing 12 school districts, last week voted to distribute \$12.4 million in surplus funds according to Meno's plan.

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