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# Insurance commissioner resigns

## Hunter cites family reasons for leaving state position

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas Insurance Commissioner J. Robert Hunter, chosen by Gov. Ann Richards to lead the state insurance department through historic changes, resigned Thursday after a little more than one year on the job.

Hunter, 56, said he was leaving the \$150,000 per year post for family reasons and that his decision had nothing to do with the election of George W. Bush as governor.

In fact, Hunter said, Bush's senior transition adviser, Jim Francis, had told him he was in the running to stay on board.

"He (Francis) made it clear I was a leading candidate to remain in the job. It wasn't a slam dunk. He encouraged me to stay," Hunter said.

Hunter said he and his wife decided before the election to leave because their 17-year-old son, who has attention deficit disorder, was not receiving the services he needed at school in Austin.

In September, the family re-enrolled him in his former school in the Washington, D.C. area.

"I tried to have my cake and eat it too by commuting every other week from Austin to Washington to be with my family," Hunter said in a letter to Richards.

"But my son has less than two years at home before he goes off to college and these lost days are too precious. So, my wife Carole and I decided that I would resign shortly after the election no matter what the outcome of the election was," he said.

Hunter, whose career spans

30 years in the insurance business as a regulator, consultant and consumer advocate, said he may return to consulting.

Gov.-elect Bush thanked Hunter for serving the state and said his transition staff would begin reviewing potential replacements for the position.

Hunter's resignation will take effect Dec. 11. His term expires Feb. 1. Bill Cryer, a spokesman for Richards, said he didn't know if the governor would appoint an interim commissioner. Bush will be sworn into office Jan. 17.

Hunter took over the Texas Department of Insurance on Nov. 1, 1993, after Gov. Richards and lawmakers replaced a three-member insurance regulatory board with a single commissioner.

His year at the helm was marked by record fines against insurers and measures aimed at preventing insurers from discriminating in the availability or

price of insurance.

Consumers praised Hunter's work. "In general, Commissioner Hunter worked for a fairer marketplace in which insurance is available and affordable for more Texans," said John Hildreth of Consumers Union.

Insurers gave Hunter high marks for reorganizing the 950-member insurance department, but criticized his regulation of the industry.

Hunter said he was fair to consumers and insurers.

"I love insurance. I think it's tremendous. What bothers me about insurance is that it falls short of its ideals," he said.

Prior to coming to Texas he served as president of a nonprofit consumer insurance group, National Insurance Consumers Organization in Alexandria, Va.

He has served as Federal Insurance Administrator and has been a White House and congressional consultant on national insurance issues.

## World AIDS Day highlights focus on education in Texas

HOUSTON (AP) — University students passed out condoms and safe-sex literature from a converted salad bar, and museums held solemn remembrances Thursday as Texans observed World AIDS Day.

As of Nov. 1, about 30,000 people had developed Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in Texas since 1980. Some 17,000 of them have died, according to the Texas Department of Health.

In addition, at least 24,000 Texans are known to have tested positive for HIV, the virus commonly believed to cause AIDS.

Across the state, people marked World Aids Day with special functions designed to raise awareness of the disease and how to avoid it. AIDS is most often contracted through sexual contact and intravenous drug use.

At the University of Houston, fraternity groups borrowed a salad bar cart in the student center and filled it with 4,000 multi-colored condoms, thousands of safe-sex pamphlets and discount coupons for HIV tests.

Lunchtime crowds, drawn by thumping pop music from an on-site radio broadcast, arrived by the hundreds to pick up the free materials.

"There are a couple of snickers and laughs but people are taking the literature, and I think they enjoy it," said Kirk Cooper, a UH student who helped coordinate the event.

"We just want to make the campus more aware of safer sex and safer sex practices. We try to enlighten people of what's going on. This is very serious. HIV and STDs do not discriminate."

Artists and musicians from around Houston gathered at the Menil Collection to mourn what AIDS has cost the arts. Houston Symphony conductor Stephen Stein said young artists with AIDS are often cut down before reaching their prime.

"A lot of those bright lights and very special spirits have been silenced," Stein said.

Harris County has had the most AIDS cases and deaths related to the disease in Texas, with more than 10,600 cases and 6,600 deaths since 1980.

More than 5,000 red ribbons were passed out at the University of Texas-El Paso this week, and AIDS educational videos were shown in the student union.

Henry Rodriguez, chairman for the World AIDS Day Campaign in El Paso, complained that young people aren't getting the message that reckless sexual practices can kill.

"Behaviors are not changing," Rodriguez said. "We have to create non-traditional approaches to reach them."

Gov. Ann Richards issued a proclamation declaring Thursday World Aids Day in Texas, echoing the global theme of AIDS and families.

"Apart from the huge emotional loss of people dear to them, families with HIV or AIDS also may lose income, health care, nurturing and stability," Gov. Richards said.



Andrea White, a junior speech communications major from Richmond, strings lights in a tree in front of All-Faiths Chapel Wednesday afternoon. The lighting of the Chapel will take place at eight o'clock Wednesday night

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