

Board begins search for new education commissioner

Governor Bush to nominate successor to Lionel Meno

AUSTIN (AP) — State Board of Education members seeking a successor to Education Commissioner Lionel "Skip" Meno are offering a salary that's less than some school superintendents make. They also want to make their choice in much less time and with far less money for a search firm than when Meno was picked four years ago.

"It's probably one of the most important decisions we'll make in the next four years," said Jack Christie of Houston, who's been designated Education Board chairman by Gov. George W. Bush.

The Education Board will recommend a new commissioner to Bush, who will nominate Meno's successor for Senate approval.

The Republican governor said this month he won't retain Meno, who was chosen by Democratic former Gov. Ann Richards.

Meno, whose term ends March 1, has said he won't be available after that. Board members want to nominate his replacement by Feb. 28.

As for salary, the education commissioner currently earns just over \$135,000 a year. Meno told board members that figure is low. "I can tell you that as someone who is on the job market now, that salary is not competitive," he said.

Meno, a former deputy education commissioner in New York, was picked in 1991 after more than four months of work, including a national search aided by a firm paid about \$44,000, according to TEA staff.

But board members want to spend no more than \$10,000 for a search firm, because any larger expenditure requires a more time-consuming formal bidding process.

Cited among possible contenders have been Lubbock school Superintendent Mike Moses, Houston elementary school principal Thaddeus Lott and Dallas school trustee Sandy Kress.

Board members indicated that if their proposed time frame isn't enough, they'll re-evaluate.

"If we don't have the ideal person on March 1, we'll do what we need to do to get the person that we need," Christie said.

Under the time line set out by the board, a search firm will be selected Feb. 4, and nominations and applications will be accepted through Feb. 17.



Gov. Bush

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Texans prominent during drive for federal budget amendment

Majority of Texas delegation supports balanced budget

WASHINGTON (AP) — As advocates of a constitutional balanced-budget amendment scramble for votes on Capitol Hill, they are finding little opposition within Texas' 32-member delegation.

In fact, Texans are driving much of the action that takes center stage on the House floor beginning Wednesday.

On one side is Republican Rep. Joe Barton of Ennis, author of the balanced-budget proposal contained in the GOP's "Contract With America."

Of the plethora of balanced-budget amendments circulating on Capitol Hill, Barton's is viewed as the toughest — requiring a three-fifths majority of the House and Senate to approve most tax increases.

While most House Republicans

back the "supermajority" provision, it has proved far less palatable among House Democrats and in the Senate.

Texas GOP Sens. Phil Gramm and Kay Bailey Hutchison support passage of an amendment with



a supermajority on taxes.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich said Monday that Barton's measure remains about 30 votes shy of the 290 necessary for passage. But

Barton expressed confidence that enough votes could be garnered.

Those in the House leery of Barton's option can turn to another Texan: conservative Democrat Charles Stenholm of Stamford, who has crafted the leading bipartisan alternative.

Stenholm's measure is similar in most ways to Barton's, except it would not require a supermajority to raise taxes.

Stenholm and his backers have indicated they have the votes necessary for

passage. Twenty of Texas' 30 House members indicated that they would support a version of the balanced-budget amendment along the lines of Stenholm's proposal.

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