

West Texas Farmers losing to drought

Fields not receiving needed rain

DIMMITT (AP) — Winter heat in West Texas has been parched that the plants' stems came up as cattle grazed the top tufts.

So Roland Stevens watered fields. And watered. And watered some more — almost 11 inches of irrigation, so far, to keep the crop viable.

After 34 years of raising wheat, the Castro County farmer assembles a simple depiction of this season: "One of the driest, seems to me."

Unless it rains in the next few weeks, agriculture experts say, wheat could claim much of the state's 6.2 million wheat acres the second straight year.

"When it starts warming up, it should be growth time," said

Bill Nelson, executive vice president of the Texas Wheat Producers Association in Amarillo. "If you don't have any moisture, it's going to wilt."

Across the Texas High Plains, where wheat has a cash value of \$186 million, fields haven't received the snows and showers that usually replenish the soil moisture.

Non-irrigated wheat that was planted in the fall came up so sparse and wimpy that dryland farmers couldn't let their cattle graze it.

Nelson said farmers lost as much as one-third of their income by not being able to turn cattle on their wheat. Some farmers have taken second jobs, he said.

Teacher pay raise debate in progress in legislature

Lawmakers split on whether Texas can meet national average

AUSTIN (AP) — A state lawmaker on Monday proposed an estimated \$1.24 billion pay raise for Texas teachers over the next two years to lift their salaries closer to the national average.

Under the bill by Rep. Christine Hernandez, the state would pay \$742 million and local school districts the remainder of the increase for Texas' 265,000 educators.

"Teachers deserve a raise. Let's do it this session," said Ms. Hernandez, D-San Antonio. She said her goal is for Texas teachers' pay to be at the national average in four years.

Texas ranks 35th nationally, with an average of \$30,519 for

a 10-month contract. The national average is \$35,958.

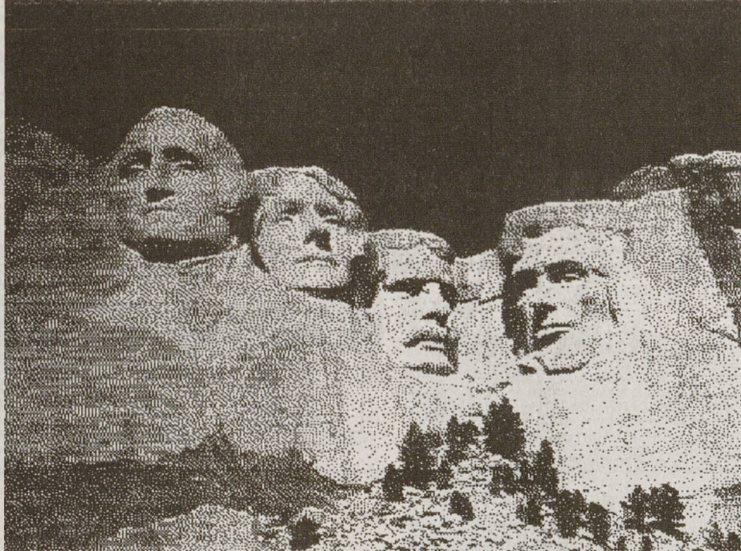
Legislative leaders said state government can't afford its share of Ms. Hernandez's proposal, which would give teachers raises of \$500 to \$6,000 and require future increases as education spending rises.

"I'm for a teacher pay raise ... but finding \$800 million for any project right now, we simply don't have" the money, said Rep. Robert Junell, D-San Angelo. He is chairman of the budget-writing House Appropriations Committee.

Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock, who heads the Senate, said, "I don't think anybody has been more sympathetic to teachers than I have and the Texas senators have. By the same token, at this time I don't know where \$800 million would come from."

WHAT INSPIRED THE MOUNTAIN MEN?

George Washington:
Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."



Abraham Lincoln:
Intelligence, Patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty. As was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether'"

Thomas Jefferson:
"God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever."

Teddy Roosevelt:
"There are those who believe that a new modernity demands a new morality. What they fail to consider is the harsh reality that there is no such thing as a new morality. There is only one morality. All else is immorality. There is only true Christian ethics over against which stands the whole of paganism. If we are to fulfill our great destiny as people, then we must return to the old morality, the sole morality."

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