

House considers juvenile crime reform Senators lash out against casino lobbyist for 'outrageous attack'

□ The proposed bill seeks to lower the age at which an adolescent can be tried as an adult.

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas House on Wednesday began debating sweeping reforms to the state's juvenile justice system that aim to curb the skyrocketing number of crimes being committed by teens.

Rep. Toby Goodman, R-Arlington, said his bill would send a message to youths that "if they commit a violent crime in Texas ... they're going to do serious time in the Youth Commission or in the adult system."

The bill would lower from 15 to 14 the age at which a juvenile could be tried as an adult, toughen sentences and expand the list of offenses for which youths could be incarcerated for a fixed period of time.

"For the last decade in Texas, we have had an explosion of juvenile offenses, both petty offenses and serious offenses," Goodman said, citing statistics showing violent crime arrests among youths have risen 282 percent over the last decade.

"We need to treat violent juvenile offenders like the predators they are, and we need to save the ones that we can save," he said.

But some legislators said the proposals were too severe and would not help rehabilitate violent teens.

Rep. Sylvester Turner proposed retaining 15 as the age at which juveniles could be tried as adults, saying lowering the age would do nothing to help curb crime.

"There is no reason to lower the age from 15 to 14 ... except for political purposes," said Turner, D-Houston. "At some point in time we must send some positive message from this House, and lowering the age when there is no reason to do it continues to send negative vibrations to our children."

Turner also criticized a provision that would lower from 18 to 16 the age at which juveniles would be eligible for transfer to the adult prison system.

"We are opening the doors to start sending kids to the adult criminal corrections system at the age of 16 when TYC is set

year's gubernatorial race, and Gov. George W. Bush has made it a top priority this legislative session.

Numerous reform measures have been proposed in the House and Senate and are likely to be hammered out later in a conference committee.

Goodman's bill would cost the state about \$60 million over the next two-year budget period and require another \$15 million to fund the construction of 1,700 new beds for juvenile offenders.

Under the bill, the list of offenses for which juveniles could be incarcerated for a fixed period of time would be expanded.

Currently youths are sentenced to Texas Youth Commission facilities for an unspecified period of time unless they commit one of six offenses, which include capital murder and murder.

The bill would add to that list a dozen more offenses, including aggravated robbery, manslaughter and indecency with a child. Youths would face sentences ranging from 10 to 40 years for those offenses and would have to serve minimum sentences ranging from one year to 10 years.

The measure also would create a computerized information system that would allow authorities to share information about juvenile offenders.

Another provision would establish a seven-level "progressive sanctions" program that would allow local juvenile boards to increase punishments for repeat offenders.

"We need to treat violent juvenile offenders like the predators they are, and we need to save the ones that we can save."

— Rep. Toby Goodman, author of the reform bill

up specifically for purposes of dealing with these kinds of children," Turner said.

Rep. Allen Place, D-Gatesville, said the provision was necessary to show teens there is "some price at some point that's out there."

"We're not getting the message to kids that in fact if you continue with violent behavior that something is going to happen to you and there is a price to be paid for that type of behavior, whether you're an adult or whether you're a juvenile," Place said.

Juvenile crime reform became a major issue during last

□ Senators debate the integrity of comments spoken and actions taken concerning the defeated amendment to legalize gambling.

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas senators on Wednesday lashed out at a pro-casino lobbyist over what they described as an outrageous attack on the Senate parliamentarian, whose sons represent an anti-casino group.

They said the comment by lobbyist Lloyd Criss seems aimed at calling into question the Senate's integrity.

The uproar comes in the wake of an 8-4 vote by the Senate State Affairs Committee against a proposed constitutional amendment to legalize casino gambling.

Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock, in declaring the issue dead for the session, this week criticized those he called "greedy" casino lobbyists for seeking a public hearing without having enough support for passage and before work was finished on other issues of statewide importance.

The Houston Post reported that, in reaction to Bullock's comments about fees paid to casino lobbyists, Criss said, "How about the tens of thousands of dollars being paid to (the Senate) parliamentarian's sons and to his ex-top employee Jack Roberts to oppose this issue?"

The law firm of parliamentarian Bob Johnson's sons represents Gulf Greyhound Park in La Marque, which opposes casinos. Criss accused Bullock of pushing an "agenda" because of ties to anti-casino forces, the Post reported.

Sen. David Sibley, R-Waco, was the first of 15 senators who stood Wednesday and blasted the remark, saying the parliamentarian had never spoken to senators on the casino gambling issue.

Sibley said of Criss's comment, "When somebody says that, what they're implying is ... that there's something crooked going on in the Texas

Senate. I'm here to tell you, and I want everybody to know, that that ain't true.

"If they want to say that about the lieutenant governor, I question their intelligence. If they want to say that about the parliamentarian, think it's cowardly," he said.

Sibley said Johnson was in the job because of love for public service and good government.

Other senators also chimed in to praise Johnson and Bullock, defend the Senate's integrity and disparage the job pro-casino lobbyists had done in pushing the issue.

Sen. Chris Harris, R-Arlington, called the comment "unforgivable." Sen. Ken Armbrister, D-Victoria, called it an "unprofessional, naive" statement.

Sen. Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, sponsor of the casino gambling measure, said the comment was "very stupid." Sen. Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo, said she joined in "outrage that such a man would be insulted."

They ended by giving Johnson a standing ovation.

Bullock, asked if casino proponents had done long-term damage to their cause, said, "I've got long-term memory."

He said he has been opposed to the issue since that although he would look at the issue in the 1997, "I don't know whether my position will change."

"When I do what I think I'm going to do in 1997, don't want you to think I'm prejudiced," he told the Senate, but would not later explain the remark.

"I think it's a disgrace," Bullock said. "They take their 20 pieces of gold and go home."

Criss, a former House member, stood by the comment and said the senators were overreacting.

"They attacked me pretty bitterly. It just kind of proves I was right on target with what I said," Criss said. "If it was something frivolous, it wouldn't bother 'em. The fact that I hit home is what got 'em."

Criss also accused Bullock and Johnson of orchestrating Wednesday's speeches. Bullock spokeswoman Cindy Rugeley said that wasn't true.

Senate approves anti-crime package

□ The measure increases penalties for evading arrest and tightens law for repeat offenders.

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas Senate, in a drive against crime, voted Wednesday to increase penalties for evading arrest and passed several measures that are part of a package known as "Ashley's Laws" in memory of a murdered child.

The package by Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, and the evading arrest measure by Sen. J.E.

"Buster" Brown, R-Lake Jackson, were prompted by the deaths of innocent victims, backers say.

The measures now go to the House for consideration.

Brown, whose bill was amended to address some senators' concerns that it was too harsh.

Currently, evading arrest is a misdemeanor punishable by up to 180 days in jail and a fine of up to \$2,000.

Under Brown's bill, approved 30-0 by the Senate, the maximum punishment would be increased to one year in jail and a fine of up to \$4,000 if someone used a vehicle to flee.

Repeat offenses would be state jail felony, punishable confinement in a state jail for two years and a fine of up to \$10,000.

If someone suffers serious bodily injury as a direct result of the person fleeing from an officer, it would be a second-degree felony, punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000, according to Brown's bill.

If someone is killed as a result, the offense would be a first-degree felony, punishable by up to 99 years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.

POLICE BEAT

The following incidents were reported to the University Police Department between March 14 and March 21:

Misdemeanor Theft

Walton Hall - A black 10-speed Huffy Mojave bicycle was stolen.

Krueger Hall - A hot-pink Huffy bicycle was stolen.

Moore Hall - A black Schwinn High Timber bicycle was stolen.

Dunn Hall - A black Roadmaster bicycle was stolen.

Ireland Street Bicycle Racks - A blue Roadmaster Isolation Peak bicycle was stolen.

Moore Hall - A white Ross Diamond bicycle was stolen.

Evans Library - The victim reported the theft

of her backpack and its contents. Those items include: a Hewlett-Packard calculator, Sony Walkman cassette radio, four cassettes, headphones, student I.D. card, driver license, \$21.28 in cash, physics book and a notebook.

Harassment

Heaton Hall - The victim has received several annoying phone calls from an ex-boyfriend.

Assault

Walton Hall TV Lounge - A dispute over which channel to watch resulted in a subject being struck on the head, choked and knocked to the ground.

Burglary of Habitation

Schuhmacher Hall - The victim reported that green Polo bag was removed from his security room.

Public Intoxication

University Drive - An intoxicated individual was arrested and incarcerated in the Brazos County Jail.

Medical students journey across U.S. border to provide for needy

□ During spring break, 31 students from the University of North Texas gained valuable, practical experience providing care for people in Mexico.

REYNOSA, Mexico — While multitudes of college students were partying on South Padre Island, a group of Fort Worth students on spring break was quietly crossing the U.S. border 70 miles to the west, taking medical care and hope to some of the poorest people in this dusty, crowded town. Last week, 31 students from the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth and a band of volunteer doctors, interpreters and nurses traveled in a convoy of vans across the International Bridge at Hidalgo in the morning and returned well after sunset each night for four days.

Most of the students are in their second year of medical school; their previous experience had been with textbooks and lab apparatus.

In Reynosa, working at four sites a day, the Americans treated about 1,200 people, performing a social service that would be impossible to provide for their own country's needy residents because of liability concerns, program supervisors said.

The medical students set up shop in one-room churches with no electricity or water, in abandoned buildings where missions had been established, or in a shantytown near railroad tracks.

"I was shocked at the conditions we had to work under," said Chris Pratt, a second-year student from Richardson.

Their patients, as young as 13 months and older than 70 years, waited outside for hours. Many were diagnosed as they sat on church pews that had been removed from the buildings to make room for the one-day clinics.

They also treated people in their homes, men and women who could not travel to the

makeshift dispensaries.

"It's been humbling," said Chimene Willis, a 23-year-old first-year medical student.

Willis and the other medical students are members of the Christian Medical and Dental Society, which sponsors an annual trip to aid the Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association's missionary work along the border.

Although a primary goal was to promote Christian beliefs, the sheer volume of medical work the students performed quickly displaced any such effort.

"That's a disappointment," said Matt Glick, a student organizer for the spring-break mission out of the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine at the UNT-Fort Worth campus. "But I also know I can't touch someone's spiritual needs without meeting their physical and medical needs."

Each day, the students and their volunteer physicians, nurses and interpreters crossed the border with a trove of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies donated by doctors, pharmacists and hospitals in Tarrant and Dallas counties.


Despite that bounty, they faced frustrating ironies as they worked in the colonies of Reynosa, a city of 360,000 people.

True, they gave immediate care to several hundred people.

But they struggled with what turned out to be a shortage of medications, with the knowledge that their patients would probably not get follow-up care, and with the realization that their efforts were often temporary at best.

"What we're doing doesn't matter if they can't do something else to improve their conditions," said Pamela George, 25. "I found myself just wanting to give them something, anything, to help them. I realized how we've become so reliant in our society on drugs to do the job. These people need more."

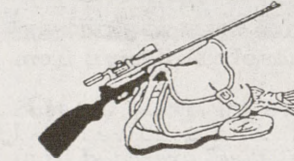
"You learn they're people, too. The poor are people, too, and not just in Mexico," said Lori Miller, 27. "I'll take that back with me."



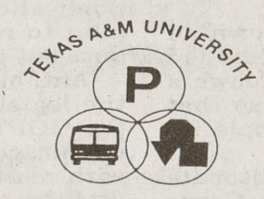
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Parking News:
March 25 - The University Center Garage will be reserved for OPAS.
March 26 - Parking for the 2:00 p.m. performance of "Cinderella" will be on a first come first serve basis.

Shuttle Bus News:
One-ride bus coupons may be purchased from our cashiers at the Koldus Building in Room 118, or purchase coupons with your Aggie Bucks at the new ticket dispenser at the Gig'em bus stop by the Psychology Building. This is a great way to get to and from campus!
Bus operations will be accepting new driver applications March 27 - March 31.
Applications are available at the Bus Ops facility on Agronomy Rd.

Watch for PTTS updates in the Battalion, each Monday and Thursday!
We're doing our best to keep you informed of activities and events that could impact your parking and transportation needs. For more information, call our parking counselors at 862-PARK or Shuttle Bus Operators at 845-1971.

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