

# House State Affairs Committee considers open records legislation

**Bill proposed to keep governmental bodies from suing people who request information.**

AUSTIN (AP) — Bringing the Texas open records law into the high-tech age and forcing the government to produce information more rapidly are the targets of legislation considered Tuesday by the House State Affairs Committee.

A bill by Rep. Sylvester Turner, D-Houston, would change the term "open records" to "public information" in the 22-year-old open records law, and make it clear that the statute applies to computer, audio and video data as well as data on paper. The measure was left pending.

"We fully understand now that information is not just put on a piece of paper, that now

it's kept on disk or electronics," Turner said. "The presumption is now that you provide the information in whatever form it's in."

Turner's measure also would prohibit governmental bodies from suing people who request information.

In September 1993, Robert Lett was sued by the Klein Independent School District after he asked for a teacher's notes concerning his daughter's conduct.

The district contended the notes weren't public. But after Attorney General Dan Morales ruled they were, the district sued Lett and Morales, then dropped the attorney general from the lawsuit.

Under Turner's bill, any governmental body seeking to withhold information would be required to sue the attorney general, not the individual requesting the information.

Lett told the committee he

has had to pay large legal bills to maintain his fight for the information. The case is still pending.

"No one should have to go through what I have gone through," Lett said.

Turner's bill also would require the state General Services Commission to adopt rules for state and local agencies to follow in setting charges for copies of public information. It also would limit charges to the actual cost of producing the data.

A governmental body could request an exemption from the commission's rules to charge additional fees but would have to state a specific reason for the request in writing.

The bill is supported by Texas Media, a group of newspaper and broadcast media representatives that helped draft the measure along with public watchdog group Common Cause.

# Sen. Hutchison endorses moratorium

**Clinton signed legislation imposing freeze on Endangered Species Act.**

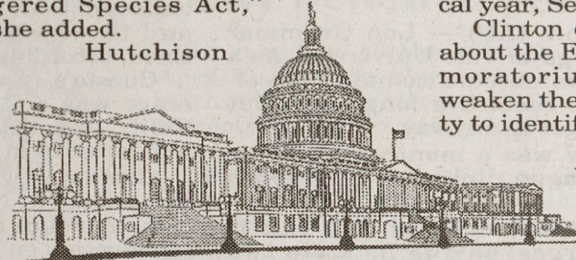
WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal government now is enjoined from extending new Endangered Species Act protections to vulnerable plant and animal life through September.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison on Tuesday expressed satisfaction that President Clinton had signed legislation imposing her Endangered Species Act freeze.

"This is a red-letter day for those of us who pledged to change the direction of environmental regulation in this country and get it back on course," the Texas Republican said a day after Clinton's action.

"Property owners in Texas and the rest of the country will be relieved to know that they will have a breather from constant assaults on their private property rights that have been the result of too rigorous enforcement of the Endangered Species Act," she added.

Hutchison



successfully attached her moratorium to a \$3.1 billion defense supplemental spending bill approved last week by Congress and signed

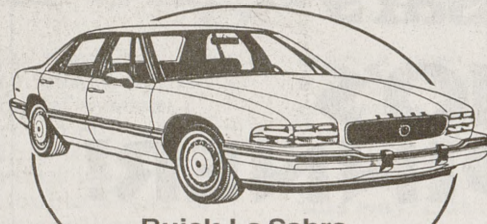
into law Monday by Clinton.

In addition to the freeze, Mrs. Hutchison's legislation slashes \$1.5 million from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's current budget to prevent it from making any new Endangered Species Act listings through the end of the fiscal year, Sept. 30.

Clinton expressed reservations about the Endangered Species Act moratorium, saying it would weaken the administration's ability to identify endangered species.

"These provisions will impair the administration's ability to proceed on its recently announced package of reform principles and consequently, our ability to respond to the needs and concerns of private landowners," the president said in a statement.

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The Texas A&M chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, The Texas A&M United Way Committee, 98 Country KORA and Bud Light proudly present the fifth annual chili cook-off\* benefiting the Brazos Valley United Way. Tickets will be sold in advance for \$10 and at the door for \$12.

The event will feature a chili cook-off to be judged by local celebrities, beer to be provided by Jack Hilliard distributors and live performances by local bands, Head West and Jason Manning, as well as a special performance by:

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- 7:00 a.m. check-in begins
- 11:00 a.m. gates open to the public
- 2:00 p.m. judging by local celebrities
- 4:00 p.m. The Bellamy Brothers performance  
awards ceremony before the concert

The contest will consist of corporate sponsored teams (\$60 entry fee) and private sponsored teams (\$40 entry fee). **This fee allows four team members admittance to the event. More than four people may be on a team, however each additional person must pay \$10 for a private team and \$15 for a corporate team.** Entries will be judged and awards will be given in each of these categories for:

- Showmanship
- Spiciest
- Best all around (1st, 2nd & 3rd places will be given)

\*rain or shine  
\*\* all times are subject to change

You will be given specific rules and regulations regarding the event and the contest when you pay your entry fee. If you do not receive these instructions please contact us. You must have these when you check-in the day of the event.

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Team Members:  
Captain: \_\_\_\_\_ phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
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Additional team members require an additional charge. Please read information above and include their names and phone numbers on the back of this portion of the entry form.

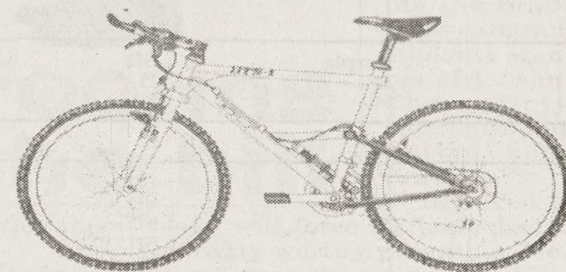
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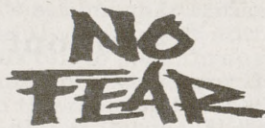
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