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Mauro urges voters to approve Proposition

The measure would provide low interest loans to veterans to buy homes and make home repairs.

By Wes Swift
 THE BATTALION

Texas Land Commissioner Garry Mauro urged Texas voters to approve a Texas constitutional amendment that would provide \$500 million for veteran's home loans.

Proposition 5 would grant the Texas Veterans Land Board the power to issue \$500 million in tax-exempt, general obligation bonds that would be used to support the Texas Veteran Home Loan Program.

The program provides low interest loans to qualified veterans to buy homes and make home improvements.

Flanked by veterans, real estate representatives and members of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets, Mauro, head of the TVLB, said the money is necessary to replenish the funds depleted over the last two years.

Mauro said the measure has

garnered support across the state.

"This is an easy sell," he said. "This amendment passed without a single dissenting vote."

Veterans have a positive impact on the community, both socially and economically, Mauro said.

"Where a lot of cities are battling crime, gangs and violence, and small towns are trying to preserve tradition," he said, "veterans help the community."

Floyd Wells, representing Brazos Valley veterans, said the program was worthwhile because not only did it provide vital money to veterans, but it also did not cost the taxpayers.

"I beg and plead with you to vote for this," Wells said. "This does not cost taxpayers a dime."

A report from Mauro's office said the VLB has provided veterans with \$354 million in home loans over the last 12 months. Since the program was established in 1946, more than 140,000 veterans have received loans for an estimated \$2.4 billion.

Mauro said he supports the bill because it is something that veterans deserve.

"We have a sign above the door of the Veterans Land Board that says, 'We don't do veterans a favor; we repay them one,'" he



Garry Mauro speaks on behalf of Propositions 5 and 14, which benefit Texas veterans.

said. "This has been a Texas tradition since 1836."

Mauro also spoke on behalf of Proposition 14, which would al-

low raising the limits of the valorem tax exemption on property owned by disabled veterans or their surviving families.

House committee approves Medicare overhaul

The legislation would slow the growth of the program from 10 percent to roughly 6.4 percent.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Over vociferous Democratic opposition, House Republicans muscled through committee on Wednesday legislation that would squeeze \$270 billion from Medicare over seven years while expanding health care choices for the elderly.

The vote in the House Ways and Means Committee was 22-14, with all GOP members of the panel embracing the bill and all Democrats opposed.

Action in a second committee was briefly interrupted by a demonstration staged by elderly activists of a labor-backed organization, an incident that underscored the pas-

sions stirred by the legislation.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich is expected to bring the measure to a vote in the full House next week. A similar measure is pending in the Senate. President Clinton has threatened a veto.

Capping a contentious three-day debate in the Ways and Means Committee that he chairs, Rep. Bill Archer of Texas said Republicans had "kept our word" and devised a plan that assures Medicare's solvency for current senior citizens and "for those who will become senior citizens."

The measure would slow the growth of the giant health program from an estimated 10 percent a year to roughly 6.4 percent. Most of the savings would come from curtailing planned increases in fees for doctors and hospitals, although seniors would pay higher premiums, as well, with the wealthy paying

much more.

At the same time, the legislation, under Gingrich's personal direction, would senior citizens choose alternatives to the rent fee-for-service Medicare, such as maintenance organizations. Senior citizens wouldn't get breaks on their premiums joining HMOs or other managed-care plans but they might get better benefits, such as prescription drugs and eyeglasses.

Citing a report by Medicare's trustees, publicans say the measure is necessary to stave off bankruptcy for a Medicare trust.

The \$270 billion in seven-year savings also was dictated by the balanced budget blueprint congressional Republicans passed earlier in the year. Democrats charged repeatedly that the figure was roughly three times the size necessary to guarantee Medicare's financial stability.

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