

Bush forms new tax committee

The group will focus on measuring public sentiment and finding possible tax alternatives

AUSTIN (AP) — Armed with a new report from his special property tax study group, Gov. George W. Bush said Tuesday he is forming a new property tax study committee. Bush believes school property taxes are too high and wants to find a replacement for them. He said his committee will hear what Texans think about property taxes and the possible alternatives. But it will make no recommendations.

Insurance commissioner appointed by Bush to chair the new tax committee. "Our job is not to come to any specific conclusions. Our job is not to propose legislation," Bomer said. Bush said he hasn't yet decided how many members the panel will have or who they will be. He said it would hold hearings in all parts of the state and report back by autumn. Local school property taxes now total about \$10 billion a year. After several months of work, Bush's special tax working group issued a report Tuesday

that suggested three options for replacing the money: • Creating a new business activity tax. The report defined business activity as "the sum of all its internal costs, including profit," and estimated it to be about 40 percent of company's gross receipts. • Imposing a gross receipts tax on all business and investment income. • Making changes in the current 6.25 percent state sales tax, such as expanding the levy to items not now taxed.



Bush

Language

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uation are unable to register for the first course of a sequence, she said, they may be forced to postpone graduation or co-enroll at a junior college. The Senate recommends that the department allow students whose majors require 14 or more hours of a foreign language to be forced into foreign language courses. The Senate also recommends that preference be given to students by seniority and that professors determine the number of students forced into a given section. Becky Silloway, speaker of the Senate and a senior political science major, said she hopes the department will seriously consider the recommendation. "It is the official voice of the student body when a resolution or bill is made by the Student Senate," she said. "We are hoping that the department listens to the students and changes the policy." Steven Oberhelman, head of the modern and classical languages department, said changing the policy would require resources the department does not have. "I find the bill, which the Student Senate passed, to be unfortunate and quite regrettable," he said. "It is somewhat ironic that the Student Senate decided to vote against the General Use Fee increase but is asking a financially strapped department to accommodate an even greater student demand. "I will take it under (consideration), but I would believe that I will not act upon the proposal unless there were more resources that would come along with it."

Oberhelman said budget cuts have made it difficult for his department to accommodate the number of students from other departments who need foreign language credit. "We have been cut at least four times since 1991 in terms of our budget," he said. "I am down a number of faculty positions. That is just the nature of a shrinking budget at the University. "In terms of faculty and resources, we compare very poorly to UT-Austin. They offer more seats in Chinese and Japanese than we do for almost all of our languages combined." Oberhelman said some foreign language professors are teaching five courses, more than most professors in other departments. The problem, he said, cannot be solved by adding a large number of students to existing sections because learning a foreign language requires a high level of student-teacher contact. "You can't have more than 25 or 26 students in a class or you have ineffective learning," he said. "We are at the absolute limit for (the number of students) considered acceptable for effective learning in a foreign language class." The department has implemented several policies to reduce the number of students who have serious problems with registration for foreign language courses. Oberhelman said he makes sure seniors are placed in the courses they need to graduate on schedule. The department also requires students to take a placement exam before registering for foreign language courses, which he said opens 1,000 to 2,000 seats in some foreign language classes every year by placing students in higher-level courses. The department makes only 75 percent of spaces available in foreign language courses during preregistration. The remaining 25 percent are opened for registration at 9 a.m. on the first day of class.

Writing

Continued from Page 1

before and then, after painting one, comes back and flips out at the beauty of a painting they have never noticed before," Christensen said. "I've had students cry over a poem because they finally got the full force." English 236 concentrates on basic creative writing skills, using examples from contemporary authors. The students are assigned two to three poems each week, which are subject for classroom discussion. Students place the poems in a portfolio they are required to create. Christensen said students sometimes have difficulty accepting criticism, but that after receiving and delivering critiques, students realize the importance of the input. "Students learn to dissociate the personal side of themselves from the text," Christensen said. "The amateur sees his or her work as an extension of their personality and gets his feelings hurt, while the more experienced writer sees the poem as a project subject to revision and doesn't feel attacked by criticism." Corina Farias, a junior English major enrolled in the course, said she found reading her poetry to the class and receiving criticism difficult at first. "My heart started beating when (Christensen) asked me to read my poetry," Farias said. "When people critiqued my work, it hurt a little, but it's gotten easier and really helped me over time." Farias said people will always disagree about the style of poetry, and differences are discussed in the classroom without anyone getting upset. Several A&M students have had their work published after taking

English 236 and received important awards, such as the Frank Waters National Award, for which the winner received \$5,000. English 236 students have had their work published in magazines such as Cimarron, Texas Review, Borderlands and Chelsea Review. A few former A&M students who took the poetry class have gone on to become well-known entertainers, such as Lyle Lovett and Robert Earl King. Melanie Simmons, a junior English major, said the class has helped her see beyond a poem's theme to understand how the poem is put together. "Now I don't just look at the idea of a poem, I look at how the vowels go together and how words sound together," Simmons said. "Our professor calls it verbal music." Simmons used what she learned in class to write a poem about what she saw while laying on her roof and looking up at the sky. The first stanza of "Cobalt Roof" reads, "Scores of scones/Butter my tum/Lips drink bare air/Until dry." Some students have trouble understanding poetry such as this, Simmons said, but after classroom discussions and lectures, the poems become easier to interpret. For instance, Simmons said, the "scones" in her poem represent puffs of white clouds. Farias said that though several students in her English 236 class enrolled as a way to avoid taking technical writing, she has overheard many positive comments. "I would encourage anyone to take this class," Farias said. "Even if you think you don't like poetry, people always like it because you learn things about yourself and others that you never thought of before." The English department offers a similar creative writing course, English 235, which focuses on short stories.

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