Wednesday • April 24, 1996

STATE

Page 5 • THE BATTALION

April 24, 195 State pumps nearly \$5 million into new HIV drugs for poor citizens **'9**7

The Texas Health Department will help nearly 5,000 Texans purchase medication this improven many others, AUSTIN (AP) — Most of a \$5 d to increased illion state health fund will be le roaming the used to purchase new drugs to wn Bryan. mbat HIV, according to a plan we will have a mounced by state health officials. orogram where The Texas Health Departore trash cans ent faced a decision this month n the street,' whether to focus an anti-HIV Ve will also put ogram for the poor on the latsigns at 26th est drugs to fight the virus that causes AIDS. Street.

d our number The department had to choose he program has etween that option and another ive years, and plan to continue purchasing adore of a crowd ditional drugs that fight illnesss brought on by the disease,

d the Queen: such as pneumonia. nightlife to the project plan that would have forced

e in the comm out and reach

what we can of d.

tionary and

st anyone can

t and bitch un-

he Sex Pistols

this tour, and

his money for

spect may be a

ly doesn't give a

but maybe I'll

erently in 20

e my kid to see

e-reunion tour.

n will be out of

d maybe then

ng to bank on

de and finance

urnalism ma

E

NY.

OR.

come by, at

the queen.

tions for AIDS-related illnesses. But Health Commissioner David Smith said Monday that the department will not leave poor people on their own to purchase those medications. He said most of the HIV Medication Program's \$5 million will go to new HIV drugs, but some money will continue to go to other medications.

Smith also said an additional \$500,000 will be added to the fund to help purchase medications for AIDS-related illnesses. "We are grateful and pleased for the additional funds the com-

some 5,000 poor Texans with HIV to go elsewhere for medica- continue supplying certain drugs ication purchasing through the end of the year. continue supplying certain drugs to the indigent HIV population," said Tom Sheffield, chairman of end of the year. is a combination of two to three the Austin Area Comprehensive drugs that can cost into the hun-HIV Planning Council. The added \$500,000 was exdreds and thousands of dollars

per patient each month based in pected to last through June, part on dosage.

"We are grateful and pleased for the additional funds the commissioner was able to find ... "

> **— TOM SHEFFIELD** chairman, Austin Area Comprehensive HIV Planning Council

Smith said. The department was searching for other funds ans have HIV. to continue the additional med-

According to the department, between 49,400 and 71,100 Tex-

The latest treatment for AIDS

Indictment of Hidalgo officials pared down

back County Judge J. Edgar Ruiz had 66 counts dismissed, the most of the five defendants

ices, it is proba e to label the judge dismissed part of a 102of inspiration count indictment against five Hidalgo County officials Tuespunk bands 80s descenday as their bid-rigging trial ly punk rock wound to a close. The himself too

last-minute action buoyed the defendants, particularly suspended County Judge J. Edgar Ruiz, who had the ar guitar chords most counts dismissed. Ruiz now faces just nine counts in-stead of the 75 he was charged with at the trial's start. "It's a relief," said Ruiz's at-

torney, Joe Cisneros.

After the case was pared down, attorneys presented their closing arguments. Jury deliberations were scheduled to begin Wednesday morning.

Initially, Ruiz and four others were named in a 102-count indictment charging them with mail fraud, bribery, extortion, racketeering and money laundering. The number of counts against each defendant faced ranged from four to 75.

U.S. District Judge George Kazen dismissed the money s is a sophom laundering and racketeering

LAREDO (AP) - A federal charges against all the defendants as well as an additional 59 mail-fraud counts against Ruiz. Bribery charges against two defendants also were dropped.

Cisneros said the additional charges were dropped against his client because of lack of evidence. "(The government) was just

ggybacking Ruiz with the other fellows, and there was really no evidence to support it," he said. Kazen indicated Monday he

planned to slim down the indictment to simplify the case for the jury. His action didn't help the other defendants as much, dropping the number of counts they face by three at most.

Accused with Ruiz are county commissioners Sam Sanchez and Abelardo Arcaute, former Commissioner Leonardo Camarillo and Head Start Director Luciano Ozuna.

The officials are charged with awarding about \$1 million in county business at inflated prices to companies represented by former county purchasing agent Ramiro Gonzalez. In re-

turn, prosecutors allege, Gonzalez paid them more than \$25,000 in bribes in the form of cash and airline tickets.

Gonzalez pleaded guilty to a lesser charge in exchange for his testimony.

In his closing argument, As-sistant U.S. Attorney Greg Surovic tried to steer away from complex issues such as competitive bidding and purchasing policy, telling the jurors, "The facts are pretty simple."

"It's a bid-rigging case. . They intentionally allowed Ramiro Gonzalez to give them bids, set whatever prices he wanted. We know why they were doing that — they were getting kickbacks, enriching themselves," Surovic said.

He urged the jury to use common sense when considering evidence such as the \$61,000 of untraceable cash government records showed was deposited in Ruiz's bank accounts from 1990 to 1994.

Surovic questioned Ruiz's explanations for the source of the money, including his contention that he would withdraw cash for spending and later redeposit the leftover money. Those figures have absolute-

ly nothing to do with the cash deposits, because it doesn't make sense," Surovic said.

Defense attorneys locked on a common theme during their closing arguments, repeating their contentions that Gonzalez plotted the bid-rigging scheme and carried it out without the officials' knowledge, then turned them in to save himself.

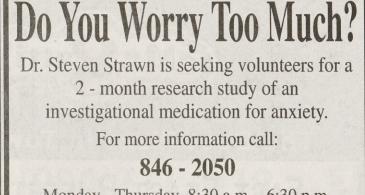
"These individuals on trial today had nothing to do with that scheme," Cisneros said. "Perhaps the only thing (Ruiz) may be guilty of is having met the devil himself."

Cisneros contended the government's entire case hinged on 'a thief, an admitted felon.'

"This is about whether or not you believe that rat. ... Do you believe him. Do you really believe him?" he quietly asked the jurors, peering into their eyes.

This is the second time the officials have faced trial on the charges. The first trial, held in Hidalgo County, ended in De-cember with a hung jury. The retrial was moved to Laredo be-

cause of extensive publicity. The first trial last two months, while the retrial wrapped up after just two weeks.



Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. Friday 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



The Vice President of Student Affairs Office wants you to be aware of our open door policy. Our office is here to help you in any way possible. So, if there is anything we can do to make life at Texas A&M better, come by 10th floor Rudder Tower or call 845-4728.

TAMU - Math This Summer

Consider taking a math course this summer. Advantages are:

- Smaller classes
- Greater personal attention
- Expanded help session

New course offerings this summer include:

- History of Math (Math 689-101)
- Mathematics of Recreational Games (Math 689-103)
- Mathematical Comm. & Tech. (Math 689-201)

Prerequisites for these courses will be kept to a minimum. Contact the Math Dept. at 845-3261 for further information.



Affirmative action halted at Houston Transit Agency

A U.S. District Judge signed an order Monday that bars race or sex from being used as factors in awarding contracts

HOUSTON (AP) — A transit authority fore completion of the project, even if the inogram that awarded \$41.4 million worth contracts to businesses owned by women nd minorities last year has been temporarishut by a federal judge.

trict Judge

formation is volunteered. Additionally, Metro may not require staff approval of a bid on non-technical grounds,

nor may it base acceptance of bids or paywhen Hughes signed an ment on contracts on sex or race The constitutionality issue will be decided within 90 days. The judge will either issue a permanent injunction, rescind the temporary injunction or consider the merits of the

Metro board Chairman Billy Burge said he was "embarrassed" because he thought the transit authority and the contractors association had a "firm handshake agreement" to settle the lawsuit in early March.

Burge blamed the settlement's collapse on the appeals court ruling in the UT case. "I think this UT ruling let these guys say, 'Hey, we can whip these guys big-time

he said.

ler Monday that bars the Metropolitan Tranit Authority from considering race or sex as ors in awarding contracts until the constitunality of using such criteria can be reviewed. According to Metro's 6-year-old Disadvanged Business Enterprise program, bidders prime contracts must attempt to use DBE contractors and suppliers for at least 21 cent of the gross contract price.

When bids are submitted, prime contracrs must identify subcontracted businesses med by minorities and women, their work nd their price.

After two days of hearings last week, lughes ruled that preliminary evidence ndicates the program unfairly discrimiates against nonqualifying contractors and subcontractors.

"No government may redress an injury it flicted by giving its victim the rights of anner," the judge wrote.

Hughes ordered Metro not to accept data out the participation of disadvantaged siness enterprises in bids or contracts be-

case at the June 4 trial. Transit authority attorneys had expressed concern that complying with the court's order might endanger federal funding. Hughes said that was unlikely, but agreed to adjust the preliminary order if it becomes a serious threat.

The federal ruling was the second this month that could strike down an affirmative-action program in Texas. In March, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of

Appeals in New Orleans rejected the admissions process at the University of Texas' law school because it relied partly on race. That ruling was temporarily stayed last week. The Houston Contractors Association,

which contested the Metro policy, was jubilant over Hughes' ruling.

"We think this was absolutely the right ruling," said Tom Fitzhugh, the group's attorney.

Metro attorneys had sought to show that the DBE designation is not really a program but rather an expression of goals. They also asserted that minority participa-

"We think this was absolutely the right ruling."

> - TOM FITZHUGH Houston Contractors Association attorney

tion is not required.

But Hughes pointed out that program ma terials specify participation levels and threaten contract cancellation for noncompliance.

In addition, the program administrator testified that contractors are required to submit forms showing payments to approved subcontractors and suppliers in an effort to ensure compliance.

Fitzhugh submitted evidence of contracts denied and higher subcontractor costs because of the program.

Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for a while and leave footprints on our hearts and we will never be the same.

Melanie Allen Tiffany Ashley Jill Allby Julie Averett Allison Barker Becky Baur Leslie Boutell Michelle Bryan Tami Cagle Kim Casey Kim Gallmore Kristen Gaulding

Cristie Gill Jennifer Gusic Alyson Henry Karen Horne Jenny Hummel Ashley Jehle Laura Loeve Jennifer Lumpkin Jennifer McDaniel Carol Mervis Kristen Moorehead Diane Pack

Shannon Patty Nicole Pritchett Margaret Quinney Lori Rabjohns Amanda Ricks Shelly Rolleg Kristen Savant Jennifer Soliah Allison Starr Nicole Vermedahl Amy Weaver Laurel Williams

Pi Beta Phi would like to wish a warm congratulations to our seniors. We love you and we'll miss you.



Tuesday, April 23rd Party on the Patio 7-10 p.m. Wings N' More across from Campus

Wednesday, April 24th Old Army Yell Practice 6:30 p.m. Rudder Fountain

Thursday, April 25th Senior Bash 8 p.m.-1 a.m. Texas Hall of Fame

Saturday, April 27th Senior Banquet 6-8 p.m. Hilton Hotel Ring Dance 9 p.m.-1 a.m. MSC and Rudder Complex

For ticket information call 845-1234