

ITALY
SPRING 1998
IN CASTIGLION FIORENTINO

Information Meetings
Room 154, Bizzell Hall West

Tuesday, March 18, 1:00 - 1:45 pm
Wednesday, March 19, 3:30 - 4:15 pm
Friday, March 21, 3:15 - 4:00 pm

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Candidates:

THE BATTALION needs your help in publishing its annual voting guide, which will run next week prior to elections. We ask for your cooperation in hopes that your participation will help students make an informed decision.

Bring a copy of your statement in 200-250 words to Rm. 013 Reed McDonald Building by Thursday at 9 p.m.

Candidates for:

- Class Presidents
- Class Vice Presidents
- Yell Leaders
- Class Agents

Bring a copy of your statement in 400-450 words to Rm. 013 Reed McDonald Building by Thursday at 9 p.m.

Candidates for:

- Student Body President

Also: Come by the Battalion newsroom between noon and 4 p.m. on Friday March 21, or call for an appointment to have a mugshot taken to run with your platform in the special section.

Bush supports property tax revision

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. George W. Bush stepped up his push for a property tax overhaul Tuesday, portraying the fight as one between struggling homeowners and businesses that now go untaxed.

"In our state of Texas, we've got a few that pay a lot and a lot that pay none," Bush said. "I'm not ashamed to say that if we're going to have a tax system, it ought to be fair. Everybody ought to pay a little."

Lawmakers have been studying Bush's tax proposal and also looking for other alternatives to the local school property tax, which generates more than \$9 billion a year.

Bush wants to reduce school property taxes by \$3 billion, paying for it with a \$1 billion state budget surplus, a half-cent sales tax increase and a new business activity tax.



Bush

But he said various business groups are fighting the business tax idea, and others are trying to protect current sales tax exemptions lawmakers are considering for possible elimination.

"The noise level is loud at the Capitol, because there are a lot of lobbyists who are paid a lot of money to protect the interests of those who pay no tax to the state of Texas, and that's not fair," Bush said.

"My job is to represent those whose voices are not heard ... people who are desperately worried about owning their most prized possession — their home."

The governor's comments came in a speech to the Texas Association of Builders. Bush drew repeated applause when he said it would be bad policy for Texas to discourage home ownership.

"There's a lot of talk about the middle-class squeeze in our country. One reason why because the most prized possession of our middle class is getting heavily taxed."

Bush, a Republican, said the issue isn't partisan. He said he hears from working people across the state who agree property taxes are too high.

He read a letter from two retired state workers who said their property taxes rose to \$3,197 in 1992 to a projected \$5,169 in 1997.

"We can see no way that we can afford to live up with these tax increases on our fixed incomes. Therefore, we have sold our house of over 20 years and are moving to Tennessee," Bush said, saying their property taxes in that state total \$625 a year.

"I don't need to take a poll," Bush said of public support. "We've got a problem in Texas today, and it's going to get worse tomorrow."

Conference seeks solution to dispose of plutonium

AMARILLO, Texas (AP) — The Russians never needed U.S. aid in building nuclear weapons, but this week they are enlisting their old Cold War adversaries for help in safely disposing of their plutonium stockpile.

"We're trying to understand their safety cultures, then offer them our ideas," said Paul F. Krumpke, with the U.S. Department of Energy.

About 30 Russian scientists and nuclear officials are attending a week-long NATO-sponsored conference with their American counterparts here, just a hop from this country's largest plutonium storehouse.

The conference was hosted by the Amarillo National Resource Center for Plutonium, a consortium that includes the University of Texas, Texas A&M and Texas Tech.

Since Russia is determined to convert an estimated 50 tons of excess weapons-grade plutonium into mixed-oxide, or MOX, fuel, the United States has pledged to help make

sure it does so safely, Krumpke said.

The United States would like to see the Russians adopt many U.S. regulatory models to strengthen their oversight system, which currently differs from plant to plant, one high-ranking federal source said on condition of anonymity.

He added the Russians traditionally have concerned themselves with major disasters while letting everyday safety issues go unchecked.

The central topic Tuesday was MOX fuel conversion, a process described by anti-nuclear forces as a continued proliferation of plutonium. Most nuclear watchdog groups support immobilization of plutonium in a glass mixture, supposedly making it unrecoverable for future weapons use.

Immobilization is not on the five-day agenda.

"Our main concern is that there's not a full representation of scientific opinion at the conference," said Don Moniak, president of Serious Texans

Against Nuclear Dumping, which opposes a MOX plant at Pantex.

Russia doesn't trust immobilization.

"From my point of view, the main reason is to expend weapons grade plutonium rather than keep it and have the opportunity to use it again for military purposes."

Victor Bolyatko
Russian Researcher

and wants to see the United States burn its plutonium in reactors. At least two Russian cities might someday rely on MOX fuel for power, Krumpke said.

Russian researcher Victor Bolyatko said MOX fuel would be a beneficial result of the arms race.

"From my point of view, the main reason is to expend weapons grade plutonium rather than keep it and have the opportunity to use it again for military purposes," Bolyatko, of the Moscow Engineering and Physics Institute.

"It's not for profit, except the profit of removing this plutonium from military use."

Since Pantex houses 10 American atomic bomb cores is approved to eventually store twice that, Moniak fears the DOE will build a MOX facility on premises just east of town.

Pantex is one of four DOE sites under consideration for such a facility.

"Once the plutonium is all here, it creates more of an incentive to build it (MOX) here," Moniak said. "The issue of processing is entirely different than the issue of storage."

Objections to abortion bill dismay sponsors

Judges concerned over bill that would require parental notification for minors

AUSTIN (AP) — Last-minute objections to a bill that would require parental notification for minors to get an abortion were denounced Tuesday as a "red herring" by Sen. Florence Shapiro, the bill's author.

The concerns came from Harris County judges over provisions in the bill that allow for a girl to go to a judge to get around the parental notification requirement.

"I'm very dismayed and disappointed in those judges for waiting until the last minute before we get a hearing on the Senate floor," said Shapiro, R-Plano.

The Senate on Wednesday was expected to take up her measure, the first time that chamber has voted on a major abortion bill since the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, allowing the procedure nationally.

Anti-abortion activists support the measure, which Shapiro describes as a "parental rights bill." Some abortion rights activists say it would invade a young woman's privacy and would drive many teenagers to seek illegal abortions.

The Senate's new Republican majority is expected to pave the way for that chamber's approval of the bill. The House has voted once on a similar measure providing for parental consent, approving it in 1981 but watching it die in the Senate.

Shapiro said the "judicial bypass" section of her bill hasn't changed in the four years, since she first filed the measure "because we had constitutional lawyers that helped us to create and draft the provision."

"This is the 11th hour after four years, and I think it's a red herring," she said.

Shapiro said she could not immediately remember the names of all four Harris County judges who visited her office on the matter. She said one was state District Judge Don Wittig, a former attorney

general candidate. He did not immediately return a telephone call from The Associated Press.

Sen. Jon Lindsay, a former Harris County judge whose wife is a state district judge, said the judges' concerns about Shapiro's bill were serious. He said he planned to offer amendments to improve the measure.

"I'm very dismayed and disappointed in those judges for waiting until the last minute before we get a hearing on the Senate floor."

Florence Shapiro
R-Plano

"I think they are valid concerns," said Lindsay, R-Houston. "Why they didn't come up before, I don't know. I think the bill was very poorly drafted."

Lindsay said the bill would provide for a minor to go to a county court at law rather than to a state district court to initiate the process of getting the judge's permission. Lindsay said the minor should go to a district court that

deals with family law matters.

Shapiro said she was willing to make that change.

Lindsay also said questions have been raised about how a minor's court-appointed guardian and lawyer would be paid in the bypass process, and whether authorities could be notified in cases of rape under the bill's confidentiality provisions.

Shapiro said she is confident of having the necessary 21 votes in the 31-member Senate to bring up the bill.

"Hopefully after tomorrow when the bill is passed out of the Senate, then we'll start working over on the House side to see what we do over there," Shapiro said.

Under the bill, doctors who perform abortions would be required to notify a parent or guardian of a minor seeking the procedure. A doctor who failed to meet the requirement could be charged with a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and/or up to a \$4,000 fine.

The bill would not require parental consent. A separate measure on the subject is pending.

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INTERVIEWS
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