

Controversy surrounds new health commissioner

Dr. Archer drew criticism from women's advocates when he defended an abortion 'gag' rule

HOUSTON (AP) — The state's new health commissioner says his only agenda is the public health of Texans but family planning professionals are concerned about his previously stated views on birth control and abortion.

Dr. William "Reyn" Archer was appointed by Gov. George W. Bush, who accepted the 5-1 vote of the Texas Board of Health.

Archer, son of U.S. Rep. Bill Archer, R-Texas, told members of the health board and others he has since moderated his views and will perform his duties with the highest ethical standards.

"My only agenda is to bring public health to people in the state and to be open to people," Archer told the Hous-

ton Chronicle in a telephone interview from Milwood, Va., headquarters of the nonprofit group Project Hope where he is a senior medical adviser.

Archer, whose father is chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, rose to prominence and drew criticism from women's advocates when he became chief defender of the so-called "gag" rule under President Bush, the governor's father.

The rule, since dropped, prevented

staffers at tax-supported health clinics from discussing abortion with pregnant clients.

Gov. Bush praised Archer as "a compassionate man" who understands major health challenges facing Texas.

"I know Reyn Archer. He will do a fine job," Bush said at an Austin news conference Monday.

But not everyone shared the governor's optimism.

"Fasten your seatbelts," Susan Nenny, spokeswoman for Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas, said.

"We certainly hope that Dr. Archer's views have changed over the past few years. Our attitude is going to be one of watchful waiting," she said. "Frankly, if he tries to chisel women's access to fam-



Gov. Bush

"My only agenda is to bring public health to people in the state and to be open to people."

**Dr. William Archer
New health commissioner**

ily planning, he's got a tiger by the tail." Archer, 42, will oversee a \$6.4 million budget, 6,000 employees and nearly 100 programs affecting millions of Texans.

His annual salary will be \$148,683. Bush praised Archer for his national international experience, and for his work in both public health and private practice.

But family planning professionals they're concerned that Archer has open not only abortion and out-of-wedding but the U.S. Supreme Court's decision 1965 legalizing birth control.

Peggy Romberg, president of the Family Planning Association, said officials from her office have received assurances that Archer will meet with her once he arrives in Texas.

"We believe that family planning proves the lives of women and children. We look to Dr. Archer to help with Ms. Romberg said.

Grand jury indicts mayor on theft, forgery charges

Scheme cost Alba ISD over \$50,000

TYLER (AP) — A Northeast Texas school district investigated for several questionable construction project expenditures is under felony indictment.

James Reid of Alba was indicted Monday on 28 theft counts and six forgery charges by a special grand jury of the Texas attorney general's office.

Reid, according to the indictments, orchestrated a scheme that bilked the Alba-Golden Independent School District of \$55,916.75 intended for two construction projects.

The school district paid some of Reid's personal bills and invoices for his Reid Construction Co. in 1993 and 1994, according to the indictments.

They accuse Reid of forging six of the bills, adding the name of the district or school architect and removing his own from \$17,644.13 in invoices.

In November, Wood County Criminal District Attorney Marcus Taylor asked Attorney General Dan Morales' office to investigate the district. The special grand jury was empaneled that month.

The Tyler Morning Telegraph reported that documents had shown the district did not follow state-mandated bidding procedures on construction of an administration building, a band hall and a classroom addition. The projects totaled at least \$700,000.

Reid, a deacon at the First Baptist Church in Alba, did not return a telephone call Tuesday from The Associated Press.

The theft charges against Reid carry a possible penalty of up to 20 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine, while the forgery charges are punishable by a maximum 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

Alba is 69 miles east of Dallas and 35 miles northwest of Tyler.

Legislator accused of conflicting interests with oil company, state

Business deal was set up several years before Palmer was elected

FORT WORTH (AP) — Two government watchdog groups say Rep. Sue Palmer was wrong to have allowed the oil company she owns to sell gasoline and diesel fuel to the state while she was working in the Texas Legislature.

Palmer, a Republican who represented Fort Worth in Austin for the first time, told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram she sees no conflict of interest in continuing the relationship between her Lucky Lady Oil Co. and the state.

The business deal was set up several years before she was elected.

"The constitution and the opinions of the various enforcement bodies have been pretty clear that legislators cannot contract directly with the state," said Tom "Smitty" Smith, of Public Citizen, a national group founded by consumer crusader Ralph Nader.

"She'll probably have to make a deci-

sion as to whether she wants to continue to sell to the state or whether she wants to serve."

Suzi Woodford, director of the watchdog group Common Cause, said even occasional sales have, at the least, the "appearance of a contract" and said she would "recommend not continuing to do this."

Texas law makes it illegal for state legislators to contract for business with the state under any budget approved during their tenure.

Because this was Palmer's first legislative session, that prohibition will not take effect until Sept. 1, when the state's new fiscal year begins and many laws passed during the session will take effect.

Palmer noted that she only sells oil to the state and does not have a contract to do it.

"I don't think it's a conflict," said Palmer, who is the firm's longtime president and owner. "I think it would be a conflict if they gave me the business because I am a state representative."

Records show that Palmer's company did more than \$270,000 in business with the state during the past 10 years, much of it while her woman-owned business was certified under state affirmative action programs.

Some of the state's payments came after Palmer took office in January, including \$3,585.34 from the Texas Department of Transportation on April 1 and \$14,280.53 in January from the University of Texas at Dallas.

Palmer said she has been selling to the state for years, but called the transactions a "little smidgen" of her total sales, which amount to about \$100 million a year.

Federal regulators file discrimination complaints against three companies

DALLAS (AP) — The Equal Opportunity Employment Commission has sued three companies including Tandy Corp., which is accused of discriminating against black employees.

Another EEOC complaint filed in federal court Monday against Betsy Ross Flag Girl Inc. accused the Dallas flag and flagpole distributor of discriminating against six female workers by subjecting

them to a sexually hostile work environment.

The agency also sued Quaker State Corp. for alleged discrimination against an employee after failing to correct sexual harassment.

The company retaliated against the employee who had filed a complaint, according to the EEOC.

Tandy didn't promote two women to marketing director positions based on their race, the agency alleges.

It said the women were passed over in favor of a less qualified white employee from another department.

Louann Blaylock, a Tandy spokeswoman in Fort Worth, said

the company does not comment on personnel matters.

The lawsuit against Betsy Ross was prompted by a charge filed by a telemarketing supervisor who contended she was subjected to verbal and physical sexual harassment by an executive.

Five other women came forward with similar harassment claims during the EEOC investigation.

Representatives of Betsy Ross and Quaker State did not return telephone calls Tuesday from The Associated Press.

The EEOC is seeking back pay with interest, damages and injunctions against Tandy, Betsy Ross and Quaker State.

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly Cloudy High: 100° Low: 75°	Partly Cloudy High: 101° Low: 75°	Partly Cloudy High: 101° Low: 75°

Sketch

By Quatro



CORRECTION

In Monday's Battalion story on the new U.S. Navy ship, the ship should have been identified as a destroyer.

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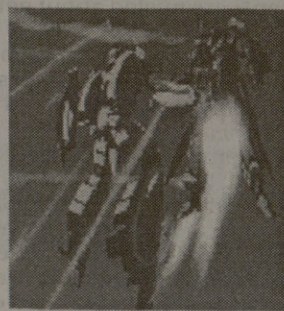
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