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East Texas senator pleads guilty

AUSTIN (AP) — A jury of five women and one man will consider punishment for state Sen. Drew Nixon, who pleaded guilty Monday to misdemeanor charges of prostitution and illegally carrying a firearm.

In hushed responses to Travis County Court at Law Judge David Puryear, Nixon said he understood the charges and pleaded guilty.

His spokesman, Bill Miller, told news reporters: "He said, 'I'm guilty,' and he pleaded accordingly. We're asking for probation."

Nixon, R-Carthage, could get up to one year in jail and a \$4,000 fine for the gun charge. A sentence of up to six months and a \$2,000 fine for

the prostitution charge would run concurrently with the gun sentence if the jury decides on any jail time.

Nixon's attorney, Herman Gotcher, repeatedly asked 25 prospective jurors if they could assess a probation sentence against Nixon even though he is a state lawmaker and despite the fact that he pleaded no contest to a similar weapons charge in 1993.

Nixon's latest arrest came Feb. 18 during an Austin Police Department sting.

According to police, Nixon offered an undercover officer posing as a prostitute \$35 for oral sex. She is among several law enforcement officers expected to testify

against Nixon.

The weapon charge stems from a pistol found under Nixon's car at the time of his arrest. He did not have a permit to carry it.

Gotcher briefly discussed potential jurors exemptions to laws against carrying concealed weapons without a permit.

Nixon had pleaded no contest to the illegal weapon charge in Dallas County after being arrested.

Three women in his car who were said to be known prostitutes, but not face a prostitution charge in that case.

Miller said Nixon had made a decision about his future plans, but the senator had no comment.

Survey indicates rise in child abuse

HUNTSVILLE — The number of Texans who say they were abused as children has risen dramatically — more than 41 percent — according to studies by Sam Houston State University researchers.

In results released Monday, a total of 26.4 percent of 798 people surveyed by the school's Criminal Justice Center, working with the Children's Trust Fund of Texas, said they had been abused or neglected by the time they were 16 years old.

That's 41 percent more than the 18.7 percent who said in a 1991 survey that they had been abused or neglected as children. A similar survey in 1978 found 14.3 percent considered themselves victims of abuse and neglect as a child.

"Whether the respondents are simply more aware of the abuse of the children ... or whether an

actual increase is taking place cannot be determined from this survey," researchers Raymond Ties and Stephanie Whitus Goodner concluded. "However, the totality of the findings suggest that the increases are real."

One-fifth or those surveyed said they were abused and 28 percent of those with children indicated that one of their own children had been abused or neglected. That's almost double the response from parents in the 1991 survey.

"I do think there has been a significant increase in awareness and more people are feeling comfortable talking about it," Janie Fields, executive director of Children's Trust Fund of Texas said Monday.

In the 1978 study, only 8.5 percent reported abuse or neglect suffered by their own children.

Report: State will need more prison space

AUSTIN (AP) — The state's one-two punch of getting tougher on criminals and making it harder to win parole is filling up Texas prisons faster than expected, the governor and state lawmakers were told Monday.

However, plans are in the works to accommodate the extra inmates, said the report by the Criminal Justice Policy Council.

"Parole has practically been abolished in Texas for violent offenders, with these offenders expected to serve up to 90 percent of their sentences under present release practices," said Tony Fabelo, the council's executive director.

"The toughening of parole practices means that offenders are stay-

ing longer in prison and more are being revoked from parole, consuming faster the available prison space," Fabelo added.

In the last year, the number of convicts released on parole dropped 13 percent. And from September 1996 to June 1997, the number of paroles that were revoked jumped by 261 percent.

Gov. George W. Bush's office said there is good news in the report, despite the need for additional space.

"First of all, criminals are serving longer sentences. And the parole rate is the lowest it has been in 20 years, which is very good news," said Karen Hughes, the governor's press secretary.

"It will require that we plan effec-

tively and that we have adequate prison space available to accommodate those tough policies. Gov. Bush is talking with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and other state agencies about the most cost-effective way to provide the additional prison capacity we will need," she said.

According to Fabelo's report, an out action there would be 3,714 convicted criminals in county jails in transfer to state prisons by August 1998. That number would rise to 4,421 by August 2002.

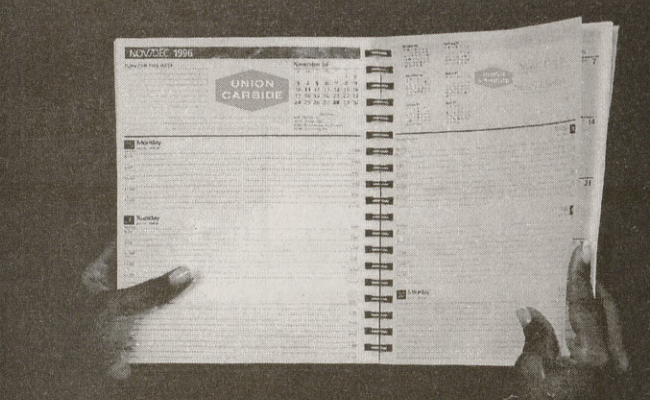
However, the report says that more are being considered to increase prison space so the state can accept convicts within 45 days of sentencing.



-Heather Beecher, Texas A & M, '97

THE NEXT STEP

- Q. How does your career differ from college?
 - A. First of all, my education did not stop at A&M, I am still learning, but now my learning is now more self-managed. My responsibilities are also different. Now, I am not only responsible for my grades, but for my job assignments as well as my safety and the safety of others.
- Q. What was the biggest adjustment?
 - A. The biggest adjustment for me was moving away and being on my own. I used to be close to my family, always having a roommate, and being at College Station. However, I have really enjoyed seeing a different part of the country and partaking in all of New Orleans finest traditions.
- Q. What advice would you offer about choosing a career?
 - A. I think the best thing you could do for yourself when you are trying to choose a career is to take advantage of summer intern programs. Get a summer job in your field and see if you like it. Also, try to intern with more than one company to get a feel for different corporate cultures.



Where Do I Go From Here?

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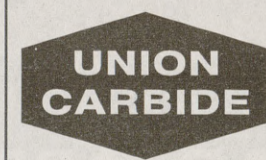
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