

Williamson's campaigning at trial causes conflict

AUSTIN (AP) — Campaigning to prospective jurors at a murder trial got Republican attorney general hopeful Barry Williamson sent out of the room by the judge and criticized by his runoff opponent.

"I tell you what. Barry's lucky the judge didn't hold him in contempt and put him in jail," rival John Cornyn said Tuesday. "That kind of a blunder is one that not even a novice lawyer would make."

Williamson showed up in Llano, where 280 prospective jurors were gathered Monday for the capital murder trial of Bobby Wayne Woods of Granbury, who is charged in the abduction and slaying of an 11-year-old girl.

Williamson shook hands with prospective jurors and handed out literature until District Judge Tom Crum sent word that he did not want him in the room.

Cornyn, a former Texas Supreme Court justice, said Williamson

made a serious mistake. "Every lawyer and really every citizen understands the sanctity of the jury. And to invade the jury process for partisan political gain I think just shows crass insensitivity," he said.

Williamson led the March GOP primary with 38 percent of the vote. Cornyn got 32 percent. The winner next Tuesday faces Democrat Jim Mattox, a former attorney general, in November.

Williamson spokesman Eric Bearnse defended the candidate and again attacked Cornyn for holding two court posts simultaneously — on the Supreme Court and a judicial administrative job in San Antonio.

"The worst thing you can say is that Barry aggressively shook some hands while John Cornyn shook down the taxpayers drawing two salaries," Bearnse said. "This campaign's in good shape."

Cornyn said the Llano incident reinforces his contention that

Williamson — who voluntarily stopped practicing law between 1989 and 1994 — isn't qualified to be the state's top lawyer.

"Barry once again has sort of demonstrated his lack of awareness of some of the most basic legal processes and, I think, demonstrates once again why he is not qualified to be attorney general," Cornyn said.

"He sort of acts with almost childlike glee and not understanding that everyone else is sort of recoiling in horror, and I think it's really sad," Cornyn said.

An account of the Llano events was published Tuesday by the Fort Worth-Star Telegram.

The newspaper quoted Williamson as saying he saw nothing wrong with campaigning in the makeshift courtroom at the American Legion post, which was being used because Llano's regular courtroom wasn't large enough.

Race for lieutenant governor going

DALLAS (AP) — Democrat John Sharp on Tuesday challenged Republican Rick Perry, his opponent for lieutenant governor, to release federal income tax returns.

During a debate before the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association convention, Sharp called on Perry to make public his IRS returns for the past seven years.

"Let's take our income tax returns and put them on the table," he said.

Sharp, state comptroller since 1991, said Perry needed to disclose how he became a millionaire since being elected agriculture commissioner in 1991.

Perry did not respond to the call during the de-

bate, but campaign spokesman Ray Sullivan said Perry will disclose those documents after the April 15 tax-filing deadline.

The debate was marked by little disagreement on issues between the one-time Texas A&M University classmates.

Both pledged to fight against restrictions on what use landowners can do with their property and both opposed a personal income tax.

Perry pledged support for school vouchers for students in low-performing schools to allow students educational alternatives.

They did trade barbs on some peripheral issues.

Trying to score with the 400 members and

dignitaries, many of them conservative, Perry cited Sharp's endorsement by the Texas AFL-CIO.

Sharp dismissed that as a false issue, saying former Gov. Dolph Briscoe, an elder statesman of the cattle raiser's association, also enjoyed support from organized labor.

"Just because the Log Cabin Republicans (a group of gay Republicans) are working for you doesn't mean you're for gay rights," Sharp said.

Perry cited a thwarted Clinton administration plan to place thousands of acres west of Austin under federal protection as habitat for the rare golden-cheeked warbler.

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