

# Lottery Commission makes bad bet

AUSTIN (AP) — Lottery officials told them it would not work. But Texas legislators cut overall prizes last year as a way to increase the state's share of revenue from the numbers games.

It has not worked. Lottery sales have been slower since the prize cuts took effect Sept. 1, 1997. The state now expects to net more than \$328 million less than anticipated in the current budget.

Noting the potential shortfall, Sen. Ken Armbrister, D-Victoria, on Tuesday said lawmakers should consider returning prizes to where they were — about 57 cents of every dollar in sales — or allow the Lottery Commission to determine how to best maximize profits.

"It was a bet trying to get us to the same place," Armbrister said of the prize-cut decision. "We didn't have that expertise and now it is costing us, it seems."

Sen. Gonzalo Barrientos, D-Austin, agreed. "I think we made several mistakes," he said. "One would

have to be oblivious to reality if one didn't think the cutting of prizes didn't affect (sales).

"The bottom line is that we have to bring in some revenue to the state and be fair and generous to the people who participate in our lottery," he said.

Barrientos said he likely would support returning prizes to the 57-cents per \$1 level if the lottery could prove its sales would rebound as a result.

Before doing it, state officials acknowledged that cutting prizes to about 53 cents per \$1 in sales would drive some players away.

But they said enough players would remain loyal and the extra money from the prize cut would offset any loss of players.

That has not been the case. Texans have told the lottery that they have either stopped playing or reduced the money they are spending in part because prizes were cut.

Executive Director Linda Cloud showed lawmakers the difference the

cut made to just one game, the lottery's Valentine's Day instant game.

In 1997, before prizes were cut, the game peaked at more than \$5 million in sales. Prizes for the game at the time amounted to about 60 cents on the \$1.

This year, with prizes at 50 cents per \$1, the game peaked at less than \$3 million in sales. That was lower than the starting sales of the game in 1997.

While the prize cut was a major contributor to the drop, Cloud said other factors included negative publicity because of lottery controversies unrelated to the games, the age of the lottery, a cut in advertising and a nationwide decrease in lottery sales.

She added, though, that returning the prize payout to its original level could solve much of the problem.

Cloud said Georgia also cut its prizes last year, saw sales drop and raised prizes back up. While sales rose after prizes were returned to their original level, they did not return to pre-cut figures, she said.

# Driving me crazy



Clint Willis, a sophomore construction science major, waits for a parking spot in Blue Lot beside Zachry Building Tuesday afternoon.

## WHAT'S UP

### Wednesday

**ATM Womens Rugby:** Come join! No experience needed. Practices are from 5 to 7 p.m. at the pitch on the corner of Texas Ave. and University Dr. Call Nikki at 694-0084 for information.

**Catholic Students Association:** "Hot

Topics" discussion session from 6 to 7 p.m. in St. Mary's Student Center Library, followed by Newman Mass at 7:15 and a Bible study in Rudder Tower.

**Study Abroad Programs Office:** There will be a meeting from 11 to 11:30 a.m. in 154, 161 Bizzell Hall West. The meeting will promote the

Italy Spring '99 program.

**Episcopal Student Center:** There will be a celebration of holy eucharist followed by free dinner at 6:15 p.m. at 902 George Bush. Call Father Mark at 696-0774 for details.

**Texas Aggie Brew Club:** There will be more of the same at 7:30 p.m.

at On the Border. Call Joseph for more details at 696-7375.

**Pre-Dental Society:** We will have our annual banquet at El Arroyo at 7 p.m. Dr. Birdwell will be the speaker for the evening. You can sign up and pay at the OPSA office by Monday. Call Shannon at 696-2922 for details.

### Thursday

**Graduate Fellowship of Interservice Christian Fellowship (IVCF):** Bible study for graduate and non-traditional students, followed by fellowship will be held at 7:30 p.m. See our Web site for location and map at <http://stat.tamu.edu/~inlow/ivcf.html>. Call Mark or Jennifer at 764-1552.

**What's Up is a Battalion** lists non-profit student events and activities. Items can be submitted no later than 10 days in advance of the event date. Application deadlines are not events and activities are run in What's Up. If you have questions, please call the office at 845-3313.

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**Fall Open House** is Sunday, September 6 from 2 to 6 p.m.  
Tables are now on sale! Don't miss out!

**It's simple!** Just go to the MSC Box Office in Rudder Tower and pay \$30 for your recognized student organization. We take cash, check, aggie bucks, credit cards, or departmental accounts (you'll need an IDT).

**Space is limited!** Remember, Open House tables are limited, and are awarded on a first come, first served basis! Only one table per organization.

Please come and join us! Any questions? If so call the Relations Office at 845-7627.

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Persons with disabilities please call 845-1515 to inform us of your special needs. We request notification three (3) working days prior to the event to enable us to assist you to the best of our abilities.

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We need your help in designing the Fish Camp 2002 & Staff T-shirt! Please submit all complete designs or ideas to the Fish Camp office located in the Kaldus Building. We need your ideas as soon as possible. Prizes will be awarded. For more information call the office @ 845-1627.

MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness

**South American Indians in the Modern World:**

**Dr. Richard K. Reed**  
Professor of Sociology and Anthropology  
Trinity University

Wednesday  
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7 pm - MSC 225

For more information, or to inform us of your needs, call 845-8770

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