

## State agencies, educational institutions prepare for computer, other technological problems in connection with year 2000

AUSTIN (AP) — A subcommittee of Texas House members received word Monday that most of 133 state agencies and 70 institutions of higher learning appear to be on course to avoid technology glitches associated with the year 2000.

The chair of the House Subcommittee on Major Information Systems, however, criticized the state attorney general's office for failing to work out an agreement with Andersen Consulting regarding problems with the state's automated child support enforcement system.

Andersen officials say they still are owed \$6.8 million of an \$11.6 million contract to get the computerized child support enforcement system up and running.

Until they are paid, Andersen officials have been unwilling to begin working on nearly 400 modules in the child support enforcement system that have potential year 2000 problems.

Don Bailey of the attorney general's office, who is displeased with the work Andersen has done, attended the committee meeting but declined to talk to reporters.

Computer experts warn that when 2000 clicks in, many state and local governments could face widespread power outages, transportation foul-

ups and telecommunications failures because of confusion over dates in computer programs.

Andersen and the attorney general's office have been in a stalemate over payment since March.

Exasperated subcommittee Chair Dan Kubiak, D-Rockdale, told both sides to work out an agreement immediately. Kubiak ordered both sides to submit weekly updates, beginning Friday, to the subcommittee in writing about negotiations.

Kubiak said the stalemate was jeopardizing a Sept. 1 deadline that the state needs to meet in order to receive millions of dollars in federal funding.

"Both parties have played this game for too long," Kubiak said.

"It's less than 45 or 46 days until September 1st, and we are pushing a time bomb. I don't know if any of you are James Bond," Kubiak told members of Andersen and the attorney general's office. "But we can't have any time bombs going off."

Kubiak said it would take Andersen six months to have all the year 2000 problems worked out of the child support system.

Under state guidelines, state agencies and in-

stitutions of higher learning have until Dec. 31 of this year to have all the year 2000 kinks worked out of their systems and have a contingency plan in place if problems do arise.

Kubiak said the deadline must be met by all the agencies because seven months of testing will be required to make sure the systems are in order.

The state has appropriated \$110 million to deal with the year 2000 problem. The final price tag will likely end up closer to \$200 million, Carolyn Purcell, executive director of the Department of Information Resources, said.

Purcell said four state agencies have been categorized as "at risk" because of their large size and are being monitored more closely than others. They are: the attorney general's office, the Department of Criminal Justice, the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Health.

"The state of Texas has no reason to believe, at this point, that we won't have our critical systems ready," Purcell said.

Kubiak was more cautious, saying, "By no means are we in a position to relax."

"This committee and all state employees are the Paul Reveres of Texas to get the message out to everyone about the year 2000 problem."

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