## Texas Senate considers bill increasing penalty for assault of pregnant wom

AUSTIN (AP) — Tougher penalties would be established for assaults against pregnant women, particularly if they suffer a miscarriage or stillbirth, under a bill that received preliminary approval Tuesday from the Texas Senate.

The bill, which also would establish grounds for civil lawsuits by the would-be mother or father

when a miscarriage occurs, was opposed by groups that support abortion rights.

The Texas Family Planning Association called it "a first step toward policing pregnancies.'

The bill's author, Sen. Steve Ogden, said he opposes abortions but that he gave his word to his colleagues "that I wasn't trying to use

this as a vehicle to address the larger abortion agenda."

'I'm trying to protect women who have decided that they want their babies," said Ogden, R-College Station. The bill requires a final Senate vote before it goes to the House for consideration.

Ogden said the measure would: Make it a third-degree felony, punishable by two to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000, to assault a pregnant woman.

 If the woman miscarried, raise that to a second-degree felony, punishable by two to 20 years in prison and up to a \$10,000 fine.

Make it a second-degree felony if a drunken driver crashes into a woman and she has a mis-

- Create grounds for the mother or father of the fetus to file a lawsuit for damages if someone's wrongful or negligent act or omission causes a pregnant woman to suffer bodily injury that results in a miscarriage or stillbirth.

The mother could not be sued under an amendment to the bill. Og-

a woman to sue her hush

'I find it odd that wene tos, D-Austin.

Ogden said assaulting under current law gene Class A misdemeanor, w

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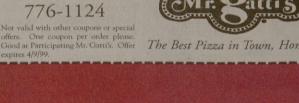
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## Abilene police search an for suspects in shooting

ABILENE (AP) - Police and state troopers were combing the area for two suspects Tuesday, while relatives searched for answers as to why four young women were fatally shot in the head inside a small apartment. Another man was critically wounded.

Police had no immediate motive for Monday's killings at the complex of duplex apartments in a high-crime area of this West Texas city, which had six homicides in all 1998 and is home to three Christian universities and an Air Force base.

Authorities reportedly were looking for a 19-year-old man and his 16-year-old brother, who have Tarrant County addresses, to ask them about the latest attack

Police responding to reports of gunfire around 5 p.m. Monday found handyman Larry Hammond in the common area of the complex suffering from a gunshot wound to the abdomen. The other victims including one who was pregnant were inside one of the apartments, and it appeared some may have been trying to escape, said detective Jay Hatcher.

"It's a very, very sad fact to have happened to four people at such a young age," Hatcher said.

The victims were identified as Sandra Witt, 20; Erica Arispe, 21; Naomi Martinez, 23; and Penny

Estrada's mother, Juanita Valdez, was one of dozens of relatives and friends who visited the complex Tuesday to pray, leave flowers or poetry and light candles in memory of the victims. One 3year-old boy carried a cap gun.

"I don't have the slightest idea who could have done this," said Valdez, who leaned on her husband for support. "But whoever it is, I hope they are brought to justice."

outside the apartmen shootings occurred. Sh daughter, who was pregnant, had grown

"They were like tears. "They all loved much, I can't believ pened."

neighborhood, which to be a high crime area er experienced such However, some friends speculated that the was the result of gangs because of a soured rel tween one of the yo and her boyfriend.

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Horton Sparks, 85, who lived across the driver and free-con where the shooting curred, said there had bent motion in the building a

"There was some sond in going on in there for sev he said. "Someone wou there, bring a little boy down and then go back port it provice and raise more ruckus." at least a couple of menint termined by several hours.

Witt's car, a light b four-door, was initially be given to c was located by Abilenephi preparation f day morning. Hall commit

Officers were whether the deaths weren the Sunday night sh year-old Jimmy Est home. However, Vald daughter was not m

Sunday's shooting police he did not known er. Two other juveniles injured told police the

## President Clinton to be prese at opening of Austin airpol

AUSTIN (AP) — The opening this century, the newspa of the capital city's new airport is to be a presidential affair, accord- ficially open May 2.

President Clinton will come to Austin April 21 to help celebrate the opening of the new Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. city and White House sources told the Austin American Statesman for a story published Tuesday. Mayor Kirk Watson has been

working to persuade Clinton to join the city's celebrations for the facility, which is the last major U.S. airport scheduled to open

The airport is schedule Griffith said.

commissioner, Democratic among people date for governor and States, representations friend may be planning the past two of al Democratic Party funds Griffith said coincide with Clinton's is chlamydia, the newspaper said. Texas Republican Gov.

W. Bush had formed a prechlamydia, an tial exploratory committed cause the syn ponders whether to seek Griffith said. ination for the White Ho

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