

Austin judge prevents AP from using information

AUSTIN (AP)—A judge Wednesday issued a temporary restraining order preventing The Associated Press from using information obtained from the Texas Department of Agriculture regarding a state-financed agricultural loan program.

Travis County District Judge Margaret Cooper issued the order following a request by the Permian Sea Shrimp and Seafood Ltd. of Imperial and the First National Bank of Monahans.

The AP obtained the information under the Texas Public Information Act, but the company and the bank argued that the agriculture department should not have released the documents because they included trade secrets.

The information released included a written summary supporting the Texas Agricultural Finance Authority Board's approval of a loan guarantee for Permian Sea Shrimp and Seafood.

"The horse was let out of the barn by the TDA; we're just trying to keep it in the corral," said Ben Hathaway, attorney for the two companies.

Cooper said another hearing should be held to determine whether the information was public and properly released.

David Donaldson, an attorney for the

AP, argued that the judge's order is an unconstitutional prior restraint on the news media.

"Our constitutional principles require freedom of the press," Donaldson said.

Permian Sea Shrimp and Seafood raises shrimp in West Texas in Pecos County, about 200 miles northwest of San Antonio.

"Our constitutional principles require freedom of the press."

— David Donaldson
Attorney for the AP

new businesses in rural Texas, amounting up to 90 percent of the from private lenders. Generally, the program supports businesses that use raw materials, like cotton, that are shipped out of state and businesses that grow exotic plants and animals.

Kathy Reed, counsel for the Texas Department of Agriculture, said the information released to the AP was public under a 1998 letter from the Texas attorney general's office.

"We were relying on a previous attorney general opinion that determined these credit reports are public information," Reed said.

In that 1998 decision, a number of companies seeking to prevent the Texas Department from releasing information was denied.

"We believe that the public has a legitimate interest in how and to what extent awards agricultural loans, and we believe that this interest is served by releasing summary financial information," Reed said.

A hearing for a temporary restraining order on the matter is expected to be held for next week.

The Texas Department of Agriculture provided an AP reporter Wednesday with a copy of the application for a loan guarantee for Permian Sea under a program in which the Texas Agricultural Finance Authority guarantees loans to small agricultural businesses.

The authority was created to encourage entrepreneurs to start innovative

solidarity with the press conference in Washington, D.C., Texas really is the death penalty capital of the nation and is anyplace for a moratorium, it's here in Texas."

Although Bush cannot pardon a death row inmate, state law he may grant a one-time 30-day stay of execution, said a spokesman for the governor's office, Mike Jones.

"Under the (Texas) constitution, the governor does not have authority to issue a moratorium on the death penalty," Jones said.

"The governor believes that we have a system with checks and balances to ensure that only guilty people are executed. The death penalty is part of a strong criminal justice system that we have. It's just one part of it," Jones said.

Villareal said he believes Bush has ignored pleas to halt executions and should follow the lead of Illinois Gov. George Ryan, who issued a statewide moratorium there.

"Just as the governor of Illinois didn't pass any new laws, our governor here can use his influence to push for a moratorium," Villareal said.

Death penalty opponents call for moratorium

AUSTIN (AP)—A group of death penalty opponents again on Wednesday asked for a statewide moratorium on executions, saying the support of a U.S. representative may help the cause in Texas.

The Texas chapter of Campaign to End the Death Penalty planned a late afternoon press conference at the Capitol to coincide with its national parent organization's efforts in Washington, D.C.

A spokesperson for Gov. George Bush said Wednesday the governor would stand by his decision not to halt executions in Texas.

The anti-death penalty organization is supporting a resolution proposed by Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill., that would halt executions nationwide for seven years.

The leader of the Texas chapter said Jackson's proposal is similar to what the Texas group has been asking for here.

"We want to get the message out there again," said Carl Villareal, president of Texas chapter. "We want to do something in

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On the marquis for Parent's Weekend is the famous Casino Night, Friday, April 14th. This year, Residence Hall Association has teamed up with Food Services to bring you "A night at the Oscars"! Enjoy a prime rib buffet from 4:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. in the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Cafeteria and a night of casino games on the second floor. Your student can use their meal plan for dinner and their guest meal option for your dinner meal as well. For those students with Aggie Bucks or cash, the prime rib buffet is \$7.95. Avoid the off campus hassle and park once in the University Center Garage (located in Koldus Building) for a fun night of dinner, games and midnight yell practice.

CASINO NIGHT

You will not want to miss **Palm Sunday Brunch, April 16**, in the MSC Cafeteria (temporary home for Shiba Dining Center) and the Commons Dining Complex. Again, meal plans and guest meals (if not already used) are acceptable.

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Cynthia A. Zawieja
Associate Director of Food Services

Josh Terkelsen
RHA Casino Night Chair

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