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Bush signs campaign finance bill

I'm not going to

lay down my arms.

I'm going to

rules of the system.

participate in the

- President Bush

GREENVILLE, S.C. (AP) — Without fanfare, President Bush palatable," said Graham, who voted in favor of the bill and was a igned landmark campaign finance legislation Wednesday as he pened an aggressive multimillion-dollar fund-raising swing. Within hours, multiple lawsuits challenged the new law.

"This legislation, although far from perfect, will improve he current financing system for federal campaigns," Bush said a written statement released after White House aides tele-

honed bill sponsors with news of the signing. Here, on the first stop of his quick swing through te of Texas a unding of Tet South Carolina and Georgia gathering \$3 million Republican candidates, Bush denied that his ow-key enactment of the bill was any kind of staterealize that ment on his ambivalence toward it.

"I wouldn't have signed it if I was really unhappy ith it," Bush told reporters as he met with emerncy and rescue workers at a Greenville fire station. He said he saw no contradiction in signing the ill on a day of heavy fund raising. "I'm not going they were con olay down my arms. I'm going to participate in he rules of the system."

After the speech to emergency workers, Bush eadlined a \$1.1 million fund-raiser for Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-C., and then flew to Georgia to help collect \$1.5 million for Rep. axby Chambliss. Thursday, he hopes to raise more than \$1 milon for Texas Attorney General John Cornyn's bid for the Senate. Graham told donors at his fund-raiser: "Enjoy every minute of vocal supporter of Bush's 2000 GOP rival, Sen. John McCain the most visible sponsor of campaign-finance legislation.

Back in Washington, the National Rifle Association was first in line to file its legal challenge at the federal courthouse a few blocks from the White House.

The legislation "eviscerates the core protections of the First Amendment by prohibiting, on pain on criminal punishment, political speech," said a legal complaint filed on behalf of the NRA and its political

> victory fund. Bush had already said he would stay out of the inevitable litigation.

> "This legislation is the culmination of more than six years of debate among a vast array of legislators, citizens and groups. ... It does represent progress in this often-contentious area of public policy debate," Bush said in his written statement.

"Taken as a whole, this bill improves the current system of financing for federal campaigns and therefore I have signed it into law."

That's not how the NRA saw it. 'We are proud to be one of the first plaintiffs to formally ask the federal court to invalidate these new limits on the political speech of ordinary citizens because we believe that this law cannot be allowed to stand, not even for a moment," NRA Executive Vice President You paid for it." The bill will "make American politics more Wayne LaPierre said in a statement on the association's lawsuit.

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Perry outlines plan to improve Texas education

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (AP) — Study ard and don't drop out of school.

That was the message Gov. Rick Perry we on Tuesday as he toured South Texas ing his five-point plan for improving age Society e Texas education system.

In Brownsville, Perry outlined his plan de black culti ower high school dropout rates.

"I'm here today to talk to you and the ents and the people about something I sider to be very important to every child the state of Texas. And that is finishing ool," Perry said. "A high school degree no longer a goal, but a necessity.

Last school year, 23,457 students dropped t of Texas schools, according to informa-

in provided by the governor's office. "(The students) are not just dropping out school, they're dropping out on their C Asian Culmuture," he said, adding that students leave nool for a variety of reasons, including rk and family obligations.

Perry said his program will cost an estimated \$200 million a year, with the bulk of the funds coming from the federal government, including the Leaving No Child Behind Education program, he said.

The governor was accompanied by Felipe Alanis, a native of the Rio Grande Valley who is the new commissioner of the Texas Education Agency.

Perry said he wants to establish new mentoring, summer school and after-school programs that "specialize in helping young men and women who are more prone to be

A high school degree is no longer a goal, but a necessity.

> - Rick Perry Texas governor

drop-out oriented, more at risk."

The governor lauded a ninth-grade initiative program that tries to raise graduation rates by lowering retention and dropout rates. But he said he wants to expand it to "fund early intervention programs for students in other grades so that we're not fighting this important battle too late.'

He said flexible methods for allowing students to earn credits will motivate students who would otherwise be inclined to stop their education early to drop out.

Perry said the state needs more counselors. especially at schools with high dropout rates, saying they can provide the extra attention that students need to stay focused.

"These reforms will help us build on the tremendous success that we have made in Texas schools," he said. "I think it's time to take this success to the next level, making sure that every child has the help and the attention we need to succeed.



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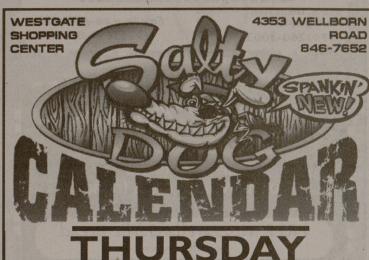
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