

Soldiers

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reactions are timed. During the scenarios the soldiers are trained to handle, the media and to treat wounded comrades for shock, Melendez said.

"We teach, coach, train and mentor our soldiers to go to war," said Alexander Figueroa, first sergeant of the Headquarters Compound.

Before a unit deploys, a soldier fills out a Soldier Readiness Packet, signs over power of attorney and makes his will, a process that can take hours. This ensures that wives and children will be taken care of financially, said Lt. Greg Pearson of the 4th Infantry.

Soldiers at Fort Hood have been loading and moving materials in preparation for a war since Jan. 21, said Dirk Davis, well operations supervisor at Fort Hood.

Equipment and tanks are loaded and moved to be shipped overseas for future use at the Deployment Ready Reaction Facility. The cargo is then loaded onto railheads that will take the cargo to waiting ships set to sail for Iraq.

"We've been doing this process for almost three weeks," Davis said. "It takes 18 to 20 days for ship sailing, which makes the whole process take 40 to 45 days. If someone wanted to start something, we'd have to be there beforehand."

The military supplies and equipment are being stored in a central location until the White House approves sending more troops and equipment to the Middle East.

At least two Texas A&M Corps of Cadets are among more than 40,000 U.S. Army soldiers also awaiting President Bush's decision about a possible war.

Maj. Joseph "Doc" Mills, spokesman for the Corps, said the cadets are members of the Coast Guard and Army Reserves. Mills said he did not have access to the names of the cadets and that more than two cadets may have already been summoned.

Robin Hood

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Sept. 1, 2005, does not offer an alternative plan for equitable funding, said Byron Schlomach, chief of staff for Rep. Kent Grusendorf, R-Arlington.

Grusendorf serves as chairman of the House Education Committee that voted the sunset bill out of committee by a vote of 6 to 2.

Schlomach said the bill will establish a timeline for initiating an alternative funding plan. Johnson said the bill is proof that legislators care about the issue of school funding.

"The intent (of the bill) is to force the issue to the table," Johnson said.

The state constitution requires equal education for all Texas schoolchildren, Schlomach said.

Walch said an equity sharing program is necessary to Edgewood ISD; Edgewood's budget is 90 percent state money.

"We (Edgewood) wouldn't be able to have school without Robin Hood funding," Walch said.

Sunset requires approval by both houses of the legislature before taking effect, but Schlomach said it is a good sign it was approved by the House Public Education Committee.

"The representatives won't vote against it 'just because,'" Schlomach said. "The Committee's approval shows it (sunset bill) has the support of

the leadership of the house."

Johnson said he was surprised by the legislature's progress in changing the system.

"I never speculated (the) legislature would come to Austin this year and fix the problem," Johnson said.

Norman Luttbeg, Texas A&M professor of political science, said the sunset bill shows a general trend toward the state assuming greater control of financing public education. Other states have dealt with the same issue already, he said.

Vermont went one step past Robin Hood; its school districts put all property tax funds into one state fund to be distributed equally to each school district based on school size.

Luttbeg said New Jersey responded to problems with school district funding by passing a state income tax. The state income tax reduced the difference in amount spent per student per day from more than \$1000 to 50 cents.

He said right now, Texas has an approximately \$2000 difference in amount spent per student per day between the richest and poorest school districts.

One alternative that has been suggested to finance public schools is a state income tax. However, Walch said the Texas legislature cannot pass a state income tax unless taxpayers vote in favor of such a plan first.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pennsylvania selling on Sunday

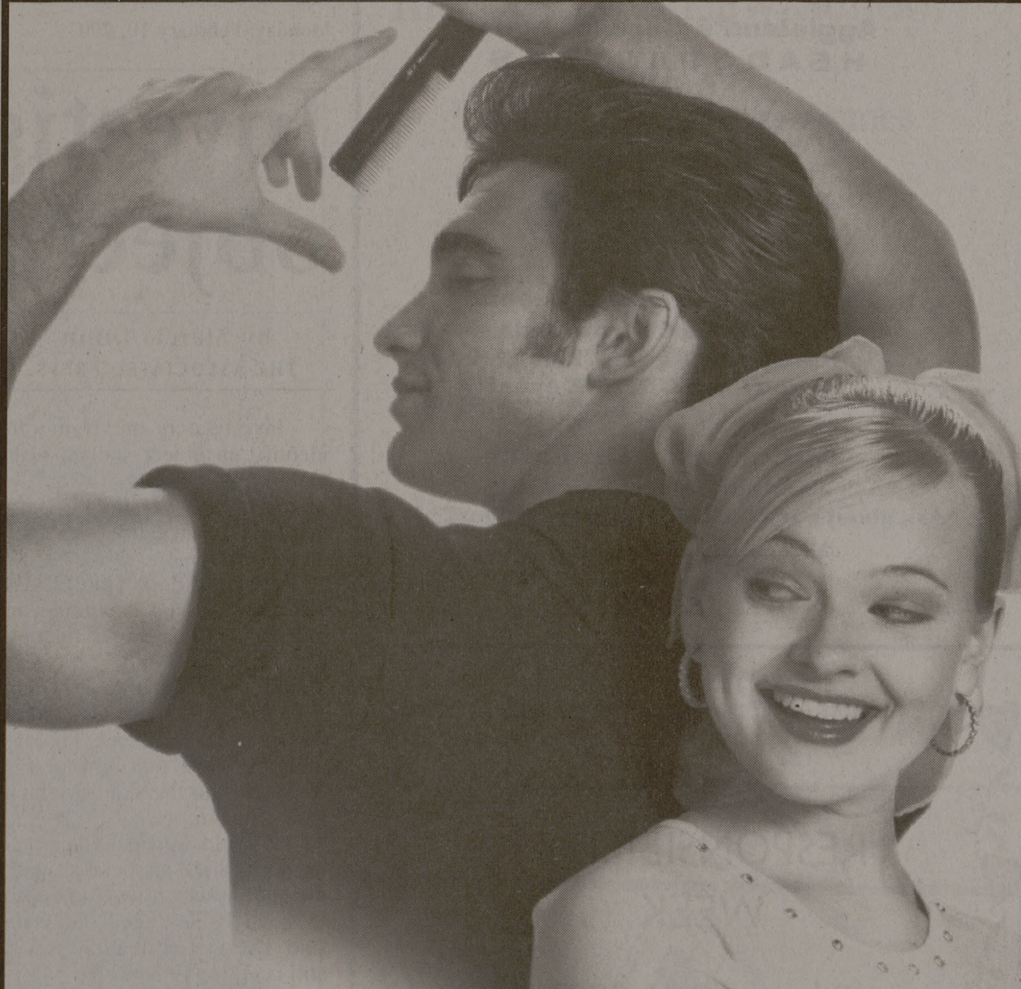
PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Bottles of bourbon and Bordeaux were on sale in Pennsylvania Sunday for the first time since Prohibition.

The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board opened 61 stores across the state Sunday — roughly 10 percent of Pennsylvania's 638 stores

— under a program that won legislative approval last year.

Many consumers welcomed the start of the two-year trial program, but critics said Sunday alcohol sales would only widen the damage alcohol can do.

Protests were held outside several stores.



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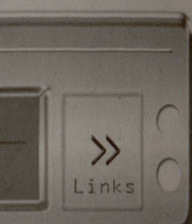
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