

# Proposed textbook funding cuts criticized

By Connie Mabin  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Proposed budget cuts that would put off \$318 million in public school book purchases are causing a furor among educators and the publishing industry, which has a huge stake in the Texas textbook market.

"This is a mess. It's not a 'no big deal, times are tough, one minor shift in money and it will all work out.' It is a big series of important issues," said Joe Bill Watkins, a lobbyist for the trade group American Association of Publishers.

"I thought education was our top priority. We've dropped to a 60 percent cut in instructional materials and it's our No. 1 priority?" he said.

The Texas Education Agency initially requested \$652 million for new textbooks in the next state budget, more than half of that for textbooks already designed and printed by publishers who are awaiting payment.

But a \$9.9 billion budget shortfall has caused no-new-tax-pledging lawmakers to cut funding across state government, including slashing money for new books in the proposed 2004-05

budget that begins Sept. 1.

Publishers invest millions of dollars in Texas because texts adopted in the state of 4.1 million schoolchildren are marketed in dozens of states.

Education Commissioner Felipe Alanis has testified before lawmakers that putting off buying the books isn't ideal, but won't hurt children expected to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills.

Educators disagree.

**"It's a 'no big deal, times are tough, one minor shift in money and it will all work out.'"**

— Joe Bill  
American Association of  
Publishers lobbyist

"We are also totally desperate for the new social studies textbooks," said Ennis teacher Sharon Tolar. "Our present text is outdated and not aligned with compliance to the state standards."

Several members of the State Board of Education, which adopts textbooks, say lawmakers shouldn't go through with the cuts because the state has already made a commitment to publishers to buy social studies and other books.

The board is scheduled to debate the issue at its Thursday meeting.

Teachers across the state who are expected to prepare students for tougher tests were expecting new social studies books this year, said board member Patricia Hardy of Weatherford. "At the last minute they get the rug pulled out from underneath them," she said.

# Elderly mother, daughter slain

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — The 89-year-old woman and her 71-year-old daughter found slain in their Fort Worth home this week were familiar faces in their neighborhood.

"It's just a shock, especially to happen to these two," said neighbor Bob Greer, 54. "They're just kind of the lord over the neighborhood. They're the senior residents; they're the authority over gardening. If anyone had a question on how to plant something, they were the ones to ask."

Crime scene tape still circled their manicured lawn on Wednesday afternoon as neigh-

bors said that on such a sunny, nice day Patricia "Pat" Syren and her mother, Pearl "R.D." Magouirk, would have been sitting out on their front porch.

Billy Crutsinger, 48, was arrested Wednesday morning at a Galveston bar based on information that Fort Worth police provided on Crutsinger's use of Syren's stolen credit card.

Crutsinger was booked into the Galveston Jail on \$500,000 bond following his arraignment on a charge of credit card abuse, but Fort Worth police said they planned to obtain an arrest warrant accusing Crutsinger of capital murder.

Fort Worth homicide detective J.D. Thornton said investigators think the women were killed Sunday, two days before Syren's goddaughter stopped by the house Tuesday night to check on the women's welfare.

The women unlocked the front door, but stopped and alerted neighbors and police after finding blood in the entryway. Greer said he walked into the home and discovered the women's bodies, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported Thursday.

Police were awaiting autopsies, but said the women appeared to have been stabbed multiple times.

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across from Duncan Drill Field.



The Gilchrist-Southerland residence is located at  
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Light refreshments will be served at both homes