

Agreement in principle reached on redistricting

By April Castro
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Texas House and Senate negotiators reached a congressional redistricting agreement in principle Wednesday, settling a dispute among Republican lawmakers, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst said.

After days of closed-door meetings, legislators announced a deal after U.S. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay came to the Capitol and met with state officials for three straight days this week. The last sticking point was over how to draw districts in West Texas.

"It is my hope that we can have a final map that we can show you tomorrow morning," Dewhurst said.

A spokesman for House Speaker Tom Craddick said that they were awaiting the final changes from the Senate negotiators.

"We think it's OK, but we want to make sure we agree with them," said Bob Richter, Craddick spokesman.

There remain some small details to iron out, but the agreement in principle covers the entire map, said Dewhurst's spokesman, Dave Beckwith.

Any conference committee agreement still must receive approval from the majority of the House and Senate. The chambers are scheduled to convene again Friday.

Republican Gov. Rick Perry is expected to sign a redistricting bill once it passes.

Republican Sen. Todd Staples of Palestine, the Senate's lead negotiator, said work remains to be done in Brazoria and other counties.

"The major terms of West Texas have been solved. This is a victory for the Senate, a victory for the House and a victory for the voters," Staples said.

Lawmakers have been debating redistricting for months in what became a heated fight first between Democrats and Republicans and most recently among Republicans working on a compromise between the House and Senate plans.

One of the main sticking points in the negotiations had centered on West Texas. Craddick, R-Midland, wanted a district that would be anchored in his hometown, where oil and gas plays a large role in the economy.

The Senate had rejected the House proposal for that region. Republican Sen. Robert Duncan of Lubbock was fighting to maintain the congressional strength of his hometown.

Existing congressional lines have Midland in the same district as Lubbock. It is represented by U.S. Rep. Randy Neugebauer, a Republican from Lubbock, where agriculture dominates the economy.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Paintbrush may be key tool in repair of space shuttle

WASHINGTON (AP) — A simple foam paintbrush that costs only pennies at hardware stores could be an essential tool in returning the space shuttle to orbit, NASA's administrator said Wednesday.

Space agency engineers found that the brush may be just what astronauts need to spread a patching compound on a space shuttle's damaged heat shield while the craft is in orbit.

Designing and testing a way to repair damage in the shuttle's heat shield is an important part of NASA's efforts to return the space shuttle to orbit after the Feb. 1 accident that destroyed Columbia and killed seven astronauts.

A new look for an old bill

The U.S. Treasury will release its newly designed \$20 notes to banks beginning Oct. 9. The \$20 note is the most counterfeited bill in the country, overseas, it's the \$100 note.

The oval frame and lines surrounding Jackson's portrait are gone, along with the frame and lines around the White House scene on the back.

Small yellow "20s" are repeated across the background on the reverse side.



A security thread reads "USA JACKSON'S ERA TWENTY"

The large blue eagle is drawn in a style from "USA JACKSON'S ERA."

The numerals are printed in color-shifting ink.

A watermark of Jackson's face has been added.

SOURCE: Bureau of Engraving and Printing

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