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WEDNESDAY

School finance system in 'precarious' position

By JOHN McMILLAN
Staff Writer

Rejection of the proposed amendment to the state constitution that would have authorized redistribution of educational property tax revenues around the state increases the likelihood of massive consolidation of school districts in Texas, said Wendell Whittenburg, state president of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association.

Whittenburg, who spoke Tuesday to about 70 people at the annual spring banquet of the Pampa Classroom Teachers Association, emphasized the precariousness of the educational finance system in Texas.

"There is very little positive that I can tell you about school finance tonight," he said.

The banquet at which Whittenburg spoke is the largest annual event sponsored by the eight-year-old Pampa Classroom Teachers Association. PCTA President Margaret Williams, who has been re-appointed to the presidency for a one-year term that extends through May 1994, presided at the event.

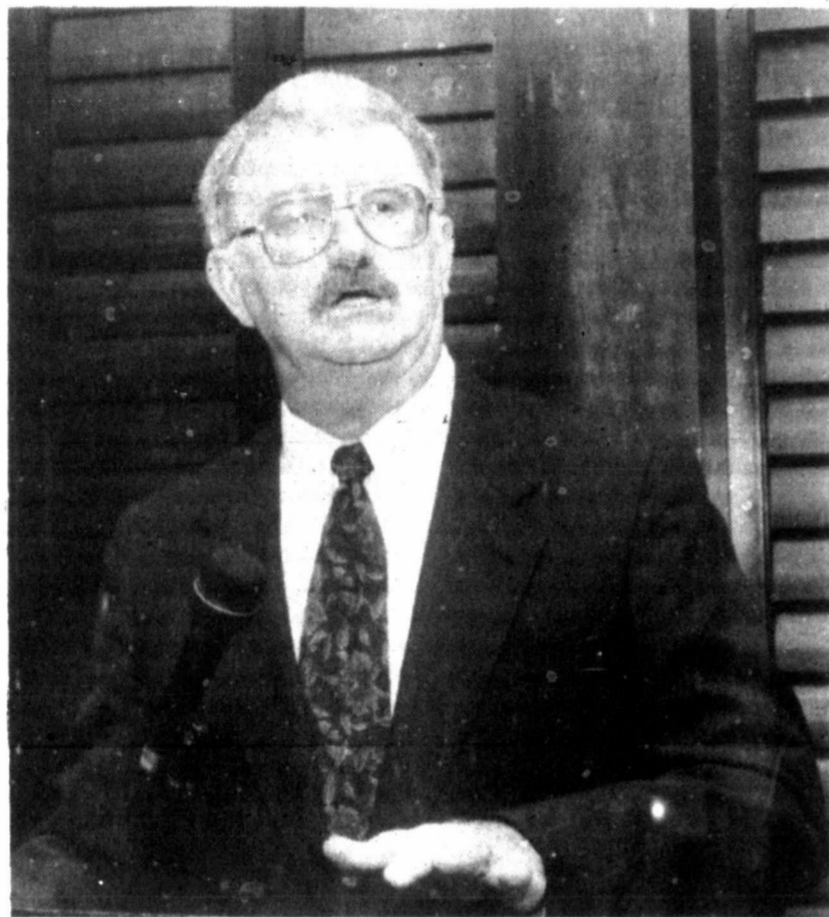
Whittenburg, 53, urged educators to contact their legislators and express their views on consolidation of school districts.

"You are the power," said Whittenburg, an elementary school teacher at Sweetwater Independent School District. "You speak. They listen."

Whittenburg said that the approximately 31,360-member Texas Classroom Teachers Association, the largest organization in Texas that represents teachers, has not taken an official position on massive consolidation. Such consolidation may become necessary as a means of financing the public school systems, Whittenburg said, although he said he regards it as damaging to the cultural and social vitality of small communities.

In an interview, Williams also expressed concern that massive consolidation of school districts could inconvenience students from smaller school systems by forcing them to travel several hours a day by bus.

Whittenburg, after his speech, said that if massive consolidation of school districts is approved by



(Staff photo by John McMillan)

Wendell Whittenburg, president of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association, speaks at the annual spring banquet of the Pampa Classroom Teachers Association.

the Texas Legislature as a means of cutting the cost of financing the public schools, "in all probability all the kids in Gray County would commute to Pampa to go to school." The other school districts in Gray County are McLean Independent School District, Lefors ISD, and Grandview-Hopkins ISD.

Whittenburg, who began his tenure as president of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association in June 1992, expressed disappointment that many of the teachers around the state have told him they want more opportunities for early retirement under the Texas Teacher Retirement System. Whittenburg added in response to a question that "to me it (the widespread interest in more early-retirement options) says that they're frustrated with the system."

In discussing alternatives for financing the state's public school systems, Whittenburg said he

would support an increase in the percentage of state lottery funds that go toward education. Under state law, the lottery funds go into the general state fund, from which 15 to 20 percent of that fund is allotted for education, Whittenburg said.

He added, however, that reliance on the lottery to fund education should be limited. The lottery is an unreliable source of revenue for education because the number of people participating in the state lottery is declining, he said.

Whittenburg noted that a proposal by state Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock to institute a state income tax would allow at least partial financing of public school systems by that tax and an accompanying decline in the local property tax rate. The proposed state income tax, which would require a constitutional amendment, will be on the ballot in November.

Read the warning label!

Copying video can be illegal

By RANDAL K. MCGAVOCK
Staff Writer

What could be the harm of copying a favorite movie? If you're a video-rental business and do it, you could get a visit from federal agents and a representative of the Motion Picture Association of America. The MPAA takes offense to piracy and does a lot to prevent it.

More importantly, you could face criminal prosecution or a civil lawsuit.

In the United States alone, it costs the film industry an estimated \$150 million. Worldwide, they lose more than \$2 billion a year, according to Tom Schell, director of communications for the Anti-Piracy Office of the MPAA.

While the MPAA efforts stretch across the globe, they can also strike close to home. Locally, an investigation of a video rental store is being conducted.

The Video Stop, 712 W. Foster, was raided as it opened for business April 29 by agents from the U.S. Marshal's Office, an off-duty Potter County Sheriff's deputy and a representative of the Motion Picture Association of America.

"This was in connection with a civil suit," said Schell in a Tuesday telephone interview. "That's why the U.S. Marshals are the ones who went in and seized the product. Our people represented the Anti-Piracy Office ... (and) go along to provide the technical expertise."

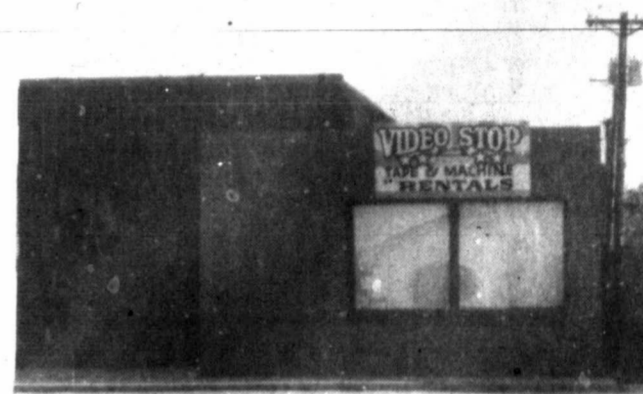
A total of 272 allegedly copied videos, 51 alleged masters, one television monitor, two video cassette players and a "copy guard defeater" were seized in the raid, said Schell.

The investigation into the Pampa store has been going on since the beginning of January and was the result of a tip, according to the MPAA investigator who took part in the raid.

The off-duty Potter County Sheriff's deputy assisted in inventorying the tapes.

U.S. District Judge Mary Lou Robinson signed a court order for the seizure and impoundment of the videocassettes in response to a complaint filed by members of the MPAA.

Defendants in the lawsuit are accused of violating



(Staff photo by Randal K. McGavock)

The Video Stop video store is the subject of a civil lawsuit involving videos.

trademark laws and allegedly distributing illegal copies of videocassettes, said John Cone, the Dallas attorney of record for the MPAA in the case.

Currently, the store is closed to business. An unidentified person answering the phone at the Video Stop refused to comment on the raid or the investigation.

Some of the movies allegedly distributed include "Basic Instinct," "The Last of the Mohicans," "Alien 3," "Lethal Weapon 3," "Raising Cain," "The Public Eye," "Candy Man" and "The Three Ninjas," according to court documents.

Tips are one of the ways investigations into piracy are begun.

"We can't investigate it if we don't know it is there," the investigator said. "There is a reward system and we'd be very appreciative to any help we can get."

To report possible violations of copyrighted material, the investigator suggested calling the FBI office in Amarillo.

Guard units help poor county

RIO GRANDE CITY (AP) — Army and Texas National Guard medical teams came to the nation's second-poorest county with a new mission to battle old enemies — rabies, tuberculosis and other preventable diseases.

Organizers said Tuesday the joint operation with the Texas Department of Health was the first of its kind using military personnel within U.S. borders. Army and National Guard units have set up similar free clinics in other countries for many years.

The civilian-military team held a news conference on the first day of the three-day clinic in Starr County to call attention to the military's increased role in humanitarian efforts, in places such as Somalia and now closer to home.

"We're providing things that they never received," 1st Sgt. Richard Andrade of the Texas National Guard. "The people are appreciative of what we are doing here."

Andrade, a veteran of similar clinics in Bolivia and Guatemala, said poverty and health problems were

much more serious south of the border, but Starr County showed many signs of limited access to health care.

"This is just a small portion of what they really need," he said of the operation.

Mothers held their wailing babies while waiting for immunizations in the temporary field hospital at the Starr County Fairgrounds.

"For the whole family it's a good opportunity," said Maria C. Rios de Garcia, 21, of Rio Grande City, not far from the border with Mexico.

With her husband out of work and without Medicaid, Mrs. Rios de Garcia said she had trouble affording regular checkups for their 2-year-old son, Jose.

The Texas Department of Health chose Starr County because of alarming increases in animal rabies and estimates that only 30 percent of the county's pre-schoolers are fully immunized.

Starr County tuberculosis rates are double the state average, health officials said.

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Scientists probe how diet affects health

WASHINGTON (AP) — Imbibing three alcoholic drinks may reduce heart attack risk. But then again, it may increase chances of breast cancer. Doctors still don't fully understand how diet affects health.

"We all want to know what is the best diet to maintain health," said Joseph T. Judd, a scientist at the Agriculture Department's Human Nutrition Research Center in Beltsville, Md.

Marsha E. Reichman, a former researcher at the National Cancer Institute, said diet "is tremendously important" to maintaining health.

"It could well affect our risks of disease," she said Tuesday. Yet, medical science doesn't know precisely how various foods affect the body.

If science can find the perfect diet, people could better control their own destiny, Reichman said.

"It may make it much more possible in the future for people to defend their own health" by what they chose to eat, she said. "What we

take into our bodies is something we have control over."

Researchers worldwide are studying the effects of vitamins, vegetables, fats and other nutrients on the diseases that kill people. And in such work, "alcohol is just another food ingredient to us," said Judd.

Some epidemiology studies have shown that women who drink have more breast cancer than teetotalers. Other theories had suggested that hormones, particularly estrogen and its chemical relatives, play a role in the development of breast cancer.

Judd's team at the Beltsville lab, along with Reichman and other researchers at the National Institutes of Health, organized a small controlled study to see if they could prove a link between alcohol and estrogen. Results of the study were published today in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

"What we did was examine the hypothesis that alcohol consumption might lead to a change in the estrogen levels," Reichman said.

The study involved 34 women,

with half drinking 30 grams (about an ounce) of pure grain alcohol daily for three menstrual cycles, and half avoiding alcohol. The two groups then switched. All ate the same diet.

Blood and alcohol tests were taken at the beginning, middle and end of each menstrual cycle.

At the end of the six-month study, Reichman and Judd said, a clear link was established between alcohol consumption and an increase in estrogen levels.

While drinking alcohol, women in the study showed an increase in estrogen levels of up to 31.9 percent, a level that Judd called "biologically significant."

The study did not establish a clear link between estrogen and breast cancer, but Reichman said it gives a strong suggestion of why women who drink get more breast cancer.

But in addition to a ill effects, the researchers found a bright side for drinkers. Reichman and Judd said all the women experienced an increase in high-density lipoproteins, the so-called good cholesterol that is

thought to help protect against some forms of heart attack.

The cholesterol effect of alcohol also was reported over the weekend by Dr. J. Michael Gaziano of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. He said a study found that alcohol consumption equal to three beers or three glasses of wine daily raised levels of the "good" cholesterol and seemed to be protective of myocardial infarction, a type of heart attack.

Judd said the two studies suggest that people should make their own decision about using alcohol based on their own health risks.

For women who have a family history of breast cancer, "it might be time to consider avoiding alcohol," he said. "If you don't have other risk factors, I am reluctant to say cut out alcohol altogether because there are other benefits. It's too preliminary to say 'cut it out.'"

Judd said that for people at high risk of heart disease, moderate alcohol use could help reach a blood chemistry that benefits the heart.

Up on the roof



(Staff photo by Darlene Holmes)

Paul Harmon takes advantage of warm weather Tuesday, repairing shingles on the roof of his house on South Christy. The forecast calls for continued warm and rain.

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Rain

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Search continues in state for school finance ideas

AUSTIN (AP) — State GOP Chairman Fred Meyer has accused Gov. Ann Richards and other Democratic leaders of abandoning their duty by asking for school funding plans from those who successfully opposed a share-the-wealth ballot proposal.

"Since Gov. Richards has suggested that I and other opponents of her school tax increase should do her job for her, perhaps she should submit her resignation at the same time we submit our quality education proposals," said Meyer.

Richards spokesman Chuck McDonald said he was "stunned" by the comment, especially since Texas faces a court-ordered cutoff of state funding to schools on June 1 if lawmakers don't come up with a plan to equalize school finance. Schools rely mainly on state aid and local taxes.

"We don't have time to play those games," McDonald said.

Meyer was among a number of leading Republicans who opposed Proposition 1 on Saturday's ballot. Voters overwhelmingly defeated the measure, which would have authorized shifting some property tax money from property-rich to poorer school districts.

The heads of the House and Sen-

ate committees that deal with public education — Democratic Rep. Libby Lineberger of Manchaca and Republican Sen. Bill Ratliff of Mount Pleasant — have invited Proposition 1 opponents to offer their solutions to the school funding problem. The two sponsored the proposal, but Meyer said he wasn't including Ratliff in his criticism.

Also Tuesday, the Association of Texas Professional Educators announced a federal lawsuit Tuesday to try to continue state funding for school districts even if lawmakers don't meet the Texas Supreme Court deadline.

"We need to prepare for the worst, and if funding is cut off, the people hurt the most will be our public school students and public school district employees, and that we will not accept," said Doug Rogers, executive director of the group.

The association filed suits in federal court in Sherman against State Comptroller John Sharp, Education Commissioner Lionel Meno and nine East Texas school districts that are among 168 projected to run out of money this summer if state aid is cut off.

School districts are named

because they are the ones that contract with teachers, said Alan Bookman of the association.

He said the teachers' group likely wouldn't request a hearing until after June 1, and that it will monitor a Thursday hearing by State District Judge F. Scott McCown, who oversees the state school funding case. McCown is scheduled to consider a motion that school districts be allowed to continue paying teachers if state funding is stopped.

The federal suit asks that the comptroller be required to release sufficient funds for school districts to pay their employees, prevent anyone from being let go because of a state aid reduction, and to allow them to operate in the upcoming school year.

Although only nine school districts are named in the lawsuit, an order would be effective statewide, Bookman said. The school districts are Longview, Alto, Cross Roads, Rains, Winona, North Lamar, Grand Saline, Winsboro and Savoy.

In other action, a business group called the Alliance for Quality Education touted a proposal to reform business taxes and public education funding in one swoop.

The proposal by the alliance — which includes a number of oil, gas

and chemical companies — would eliminate the local school property tax on businesses and the state franchise-earned surplus tax.

The levies would be replaced with a tax based on a business's gross revenues, minus its cost of buying goods and services. The tax would

apply to all businesses based on their activity in the state. It could raise \$700 million a year more for education from businesses, backers said.

Only corporations currently pay the franchise tax, and capital-intensive businesses are hit by the property tax.

But top state leaders have said there won't be new taxes this legislative session, casting doubt on the potential for such a plan. Lawmakers also noted that the session is scheduled to end May 31, leaving little time for wholesale tax restructuring.

Senate GOP draws battle line on president's education plan

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans contend that President Clinton's education plan will strip school boards of their freedom to make local choices about curricula, but the administration denies that any "checklist mentality" is in the works.

"Isn't it time ... that the federal government stopped trying to be the Pied Piper of school reform and instead got behind our states and local school boards?" said Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, at a Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee hearing on Tuesday.

Sen. Nancy Kassebaum R-Kan., said she also was concerned that the "top-down approach" of the Goals 2000 package "may stifle rather than assist reform effort" already under way at state and local levels.

But Education Secretary Richard Riley, who encountered similar objections from House Republicans last week, said Clinton's "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" would "turn the system loose" by allowing local school districts to decide how to reach voluntary national goals.

"I don't see any checklist mentality here," he said.

The \$420 million Goals 2000 package would create voluntary national standards for U.S. schools and certification for job training programs.

The Bush administration relied on private groups to develop standards

in mathematics, science, English, history, civics and the arts. The National Association of Teachers of Mathematics finished work on math standards in 1990 and they have been adopted by an estimated 40 percent of the nation's schools.

But under Clinton's plan, state and local school officials would decide how to meet national goals. The plan relies largely on public pressure to force school improvements.

A council would develop the national standards and another would certify that states were meeting them. A separate panel would develop national standards for job training programs.

To meet the goals, schools would have to offer students a solid curriculum, provide necessary learning aids and allow teachers opportunities for professional enrichment.

Riley has said that the proposals focus on such things as improved professional development for teachers, increased parental and community involvement, increased flexibility from regulations and greater accountability for schools.

The idea of national standards enjoys broad support among educators.

But Congressional Republicans are skeptical of an increased federal role in public education, traditionally considered a state and local domain in the United States. Mem-

bers of the Senate committee were especially concerned that the standards panels would force federal guidelines on states.

But Riley responded that "This bill does not force a one-size-fits-all approach to education reform on states and communities. The standards and guidelines in this legislation are voluntary, but they invite the re-invention of schools."

Clinton's package has won near unanimous praise among national education groups. But a Kansas teacher said he, too, feared it allowed too much federal involvement.

"The pressure will be from the top down to adopt a system," said Norman Conrad, a history teacher from Uniontown, and the Kansas "Teacher of the Year."

But Tracy Bailey, the national Teacher of the Year, said schools "need this incentive at the national level."

"Without national goals and national standards, we have no idea where we're headed," the Melbourne, Fla., mathematics teacher said.

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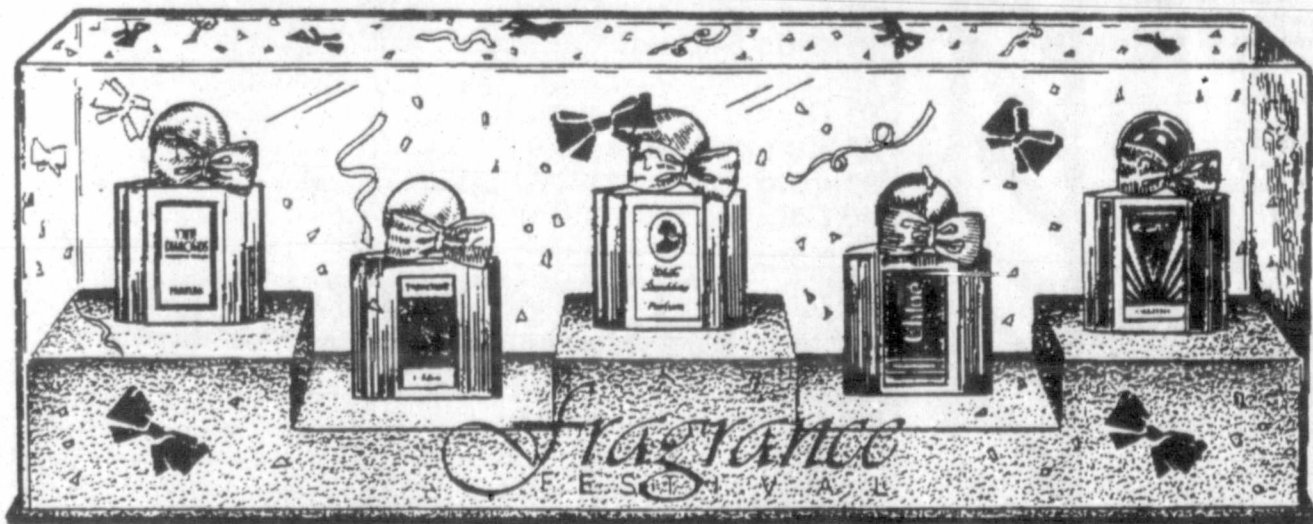
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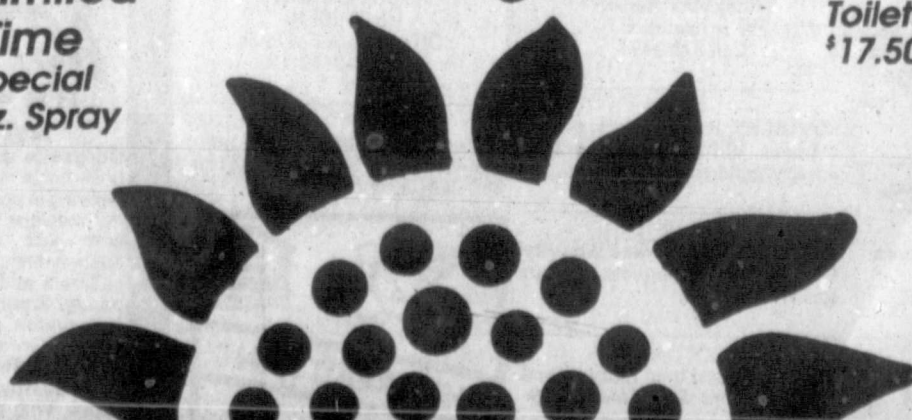


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