

Guest Slot

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Jim Warren

PIA-Texas Director of Governmental Affairs

(Reprinted from *Texas Printer*, Spring, 1996)

WHEN WE THINK OF TAX REFORM, we probably think of the proposals being offered by the presidential candidates.

Of course, there's the Steve Forbes-inspired flat tax, which has been adopted -- in one form or another -- by several of Forbes' rivals. Other suggestions include abolishing the Internal Revenue Service (hip, hip, hooray!), filing our tax returns on a simple postcard, and moving to a national sales tax.

In contrast to the high-profile tax debate on the national stage, the tax reform movement at the state level has been decidedly low key. No prominent officeholders have endorsed any particular plans, the public appears apathetic, and affected industries are quietly tweaking all of the proposals to give themselves an advantage.

Governor George W. Bush deserves credit for even raising the controversial issue of tax reform. The governor believes, correctly, that property taxes are simply too high. He also believes, again correctly, that the state should fund a larger portion of public education and that local school property taxes should be correspondingly reduced -- even abolished.

So far, so good. But then the question becomes: How does the state raise the money to replace the lost property tax revenue? To find an answer, the governor assembled an informal tax force made up of the best minds from his office as well as advisers to Lt. Governor Bob Bullock, Speaker Pete Laney and Comptroller John Sharp.

Unlike previous governors who appointed "Blue Ribbon" committees, this working group called themselves the blue collar committee. They quietly and deliberately studied and discussed all of the options available -- except an income tax, which the Constitution prohibits unless the voters expressly endorse the idea. Even without the constitutional prohibition, the income tax is despised by all Texas leaders and has no popular support.

After months of meetings, the working group came up with three proposals.

1. INCREASE THE SALES TAX

The state could increase sales tax revenues in two ways -- expand the sales tax base or increase the sales tax rate. If

state leaders decide to take this route, they likely would settle on a combination of these two options.

The current sales tax rate is 6.25 percent, although local jurisdictions have some sales tax authority that, when fully used, raises the rate on taxpayers to 8.25 percent.

Of course, many goods and services are not taxed, and many of these exemptions are extremely popular. Exemptions on basics, such as food, medicine and rent are popular with average voters, and exemptions on manufacturing equipment and professional services are popular with businesses.

The working group estimated that without broadening the tax base by eliminating exemptions, the sale tax would have to be doubled to pay for property tax cuts. That approach, obviously, won't sell.

The state grants almost \$3.3 billion in sales tax exemptions every year on goods,

with business enjoying 45 percent of those exemptions. Another \$2 billion a year in sales tax exemptions fall to services, with business enjoying two-thirds of those exemptions. So even if every exemption is eliminated, the total of \$5.3 billion in new revenues would probably not be enough to pay for total property tax relief. And, of course, many of those exemptions are so popular that they could never be eliminated.

Many analysts and virtually all minority lawmakers believe the sales tax is inherently regressive and that eliminating the exemptions on goods would add to that regressivity. Finding the political will to increase the sales tax rate or broaden the base -- or to agree to any combination of the two -- will be nearly impossible.

(To be continued- Gross Receipts Tax)

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Please plan to be in attendance at the Fireworks Display on Thursday the 4th of July at approximately 9:30 p.m. Your check can be mailed to the Fireworks Fund:

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Mike and Anne Zoellick of Eastland are proud to announce the arrival of their daughter, Claire Marie. She was born on May 3, 1996 at Eastland Memorial Hospital weighing 7 lbs. 7 ounces, and was 21 3/4 inches long.

Claire Marie's grandparents, Tom and Linda

Krueger from New York, and Harold and Loretta Zoellick from Chicago were in Eastland for her Baptism on June 2, 1996 at Redeemer Lutheran Church.

Also present for the Baptism were Claire Marie's Godparents, Steve and Jane Zoellick of Chicago.

Tyrone And Daniels Family Reunion June 8

Tyrone and Daniels families will be having their third annual reunion and would enjoy the presence of all family and friends on Saturday, June 8 at Thurber Lake Resort.

There is a \$5.00 charge per person to

enter the resort. Lunch will be served at noon, eat and drink furnished. Bring your favorite side dish and join us.

For further information contact Charlotte Daniels 629-2705 or Kim Bright 693-5428.

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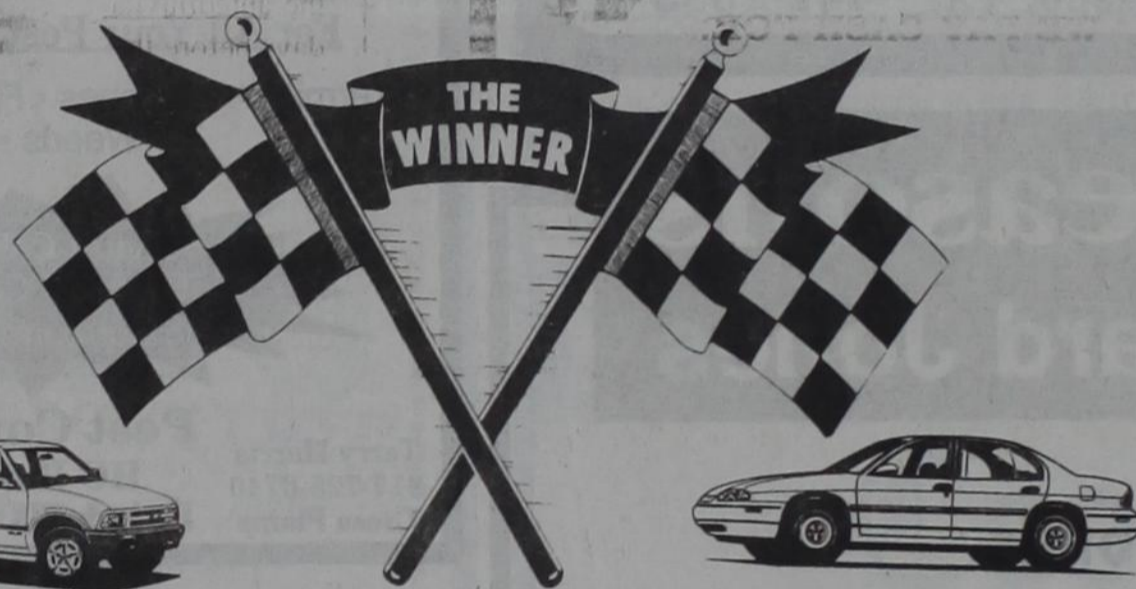
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So, both of us win. You'll just win sooner than I will. Anyway, doesn't it just make sense to get this service so your family doesn't have to live with the uncertainty of a system break down on the hottest day of the summer?

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From Pg. 1

Volunteer Fire Depts.

tions and various other sources.

Eastland County disbursements for Rural Fire Protection are as follows:

Pct. 1: Eastland Fire Dept., \$4,800 annually.

Pct. 2: Desdemona Fire Dept., \$3,600 annually.

Olden Fire Dept., \$3,600 annually.

Ranger Fire Dept., \$7,200 annually.

Pct. 3: Carbon Fire Dept., \$7,800 annually.

Gorman Fire Dept., \$10,800 annually.

Rising Star Dept., \$4,800 annually.

Pct. 4: Cisco Fire Dept., \$7,200 annually.

It is difficult to make an exact comparison on these figures, for some of the departments are drawing some of their county money through disbursements for ambulance service.

The county has dispersed the funds this way for a number of years. Soon county officials will be working on the budget for 1996-97.

There are expected to be some requests to change some of this funding, with raises where needed.

Letter To The Editor

I wish I could wiggle my nose and bring the people of Ranger together for the good of Ranger.

Sadly it will take more than a nose wiggle. There is too much hate & distnush here. While working the School Board election on May 4, 1996 very few people that came in to

vote has a smile. Most were griping about having to go to 3 different tables to vote. BIG DEAL.

My late husband wanted so very much to be a part of this community, but the disease "Alzheimers" kept him from doing what he dreamed of doing when we moved here. We were told by some of his relatives that people didn't get along here and it had been that way for many years.

I don't know what to do about the situation but it seems to me that until people change town will never change.

Thank you Ruth Glenn Ranger, Tx.

Ranger EMS & Fire Report

Blackwell rd.

4-26-96, 5:33 am Responded to Spring Rd. DOA.

4-26-96, 11:34 am Responded to Strawn, transported female to EMH, chest pain.

4-26-96, 3:30 pm Responded to Iona St. transported male to EMH, unresponsive.

4-26-96, 4:30 pm Responded to Homer St. MVA. No transport.

4-26-96, 5:00 pm Responded to the Gholson, transported female to EMH, chest pains.

4-27-96, 11:18 am Transported male to EMH, patient involved in an MVA, earlier.

4-28-96, 3:02 am Responded to loop 254. Female received treatment, no transport.

4-28-96, 9:57 am Responded to cnty Rd. 458, transported male to EMH, illness.

4-28-96, male patient walk in to station. Received treatment, no transport.

TOTAL EMS ALARMS TO DATE: TWO HUNDRED FORTY-NINE.

ATTENTION SENIORS 96

Mr. Bond has miniature diplomas for each of you. Come by the office to pick up yours.

If you would like a copy of the graduation video, bring a video by the office, and we'll make you a copy.

Claude Robertson Celebrates His 93rd Birthday



Claude Robertson celebrated his 93rd Birthday January 31st at the Senior Citizens Center with a host of friends. He lives at the Gholson Hotel Apts. He came here from California and Oregon on Thanksgiving Day in 1989. He was born in

1903. He is the youngest and living of 9 children. 6 boys and 3 girls.

We all celebrated with a large Birthday Cake. The person sitting by him is Willie Dee Sutton also of Ranger.

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The Ranger Times
Thursday,
June 6, 1996

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From Pg. 1

County Storm

difference at Lake Leon.

The Lake depth at the spillway is currently 73.1 ft., he said.

In Ranger, the Fire Department reports no damage from the storm, and about an inch of rain.

Weather spotters also sent out from this Fire Department when warnings came in from the National Weather Service Monday night.

Some of the firemen went to the Gholson Hotel and others to the Nursing Home, to assist there if necessary. Others went to different locations in the countryside.

They, like everyone else in the County, were glad to see the wild clouds move on without any damage. And all were especially glad to have some more rain, with the new life it will bring to pastures and crops.

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