

BILL TO APPROPRIATE \$500,000 TO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION FAILS

■(GIT) **SB707**, would have appropriated over \$500,000 to the State Board of Education for a school district in Tulsa County, but the measure failed Wednesday in a House Appropriation and Budget Subcommittee on Education.

The bill's author, Rep. Don Weese, R-Broken Arrow, explained that a glass company located in Tulsa was overcharged. According to Weese, the Legislature passed a bill last session to direct the Tulsa County Treasurer to refund the money to the glass company over a five-year period. Weese said he feared the refund would, in turn, hurt the local district.

Chairman of the committee, Rep. Jack Begley, D-Goodwell, told Weese he would amend the bill on the floor if it was approved by members. "I would be amiss if we did this and not take care of all the other tax protests around the state." Begley explained that the protests totaled over \$5 million statewide. However, the bill with a vote of 4 to 4 failed, and received a motion for report progress by members.

FROM: MARTA MCCLOSKEY

DATE: 03/27/96

UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT PENALIZED AGAIN BY HOUSE DEMOCRATS

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Democrat leaders in the House voted again Wednesday to take punitive action toward Union School District, GOP Rep. Don Weese of Broken Arrow charged.

The third-term lawmaker criticized the House leadership after a legislative subcommittee killed a measure that would have reimbursed the school district for the loss of more than half a million dollars in ad valorem taxes attributed to a refund which Tulsa County must make to a Tulsa Manufacturer that overpaid its property taxes.

Union School District received more than half of the approximately \$900,000 excess tax payment, Weese related.

Although the statute of limitations for the manufacturer to claim a rebate expired, Weese said, a mandate requiring the Tulsa County Treasurer to repay the entire overpayment in five equal annual installments was quietly slipped into a bill last year by a House Democrat from north central Tulsa.

The bill cleared both houses of the Legislature during the final, hectic days of last year's session and was signed into law by the governor, records reflect.

Consequently, Republican Sens. Charles Ford and Jerry Smith of Tulsa and Ged Wright of Broken Arrow, along with Weese, introduced **SB707**. It would have appropriated \$517,995 to the State Board of Education to defray the ad valorem tax loss to Union School District stemming from the refund.

The Senate endorsed the bill 43 to 0 on Feb. 28, but the House Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee on Education killed it Wednesday by a 4 to 4 tie vote. "The bill wasn't even debated," Weese said.

Opposing the bill were Rep. Jack Begley, D-Goodwell, chairman of the subcommittee; Rep. James Hager, D-Pawhuska, chairman of the House Committee on Education; Rep. Larry E. Adair, D-Stilwell, a former school teacher and administrator who chairs the House Transportation Committee; and Rep. Calvin Anthony, D-Stillwater, a member of the House Education Committee.

Voting in support of the bill were Rep. Betty Boyd, D-Tulsa; Rep. John Bryant, R-Tulsa; Rep. Jim Reese, R-Deer Creek; and House GOP Leader Larry Ferguson, R-Cleveland.

The vote on **SB707**, coupled with numerous other actions by Democratic House leadership, have cost Union School District several million dollars in state aid in recent years, Weese said.

Union filed a lawsuit against the Tulsa County Treasurer, but the proceedings were halted temporarily pending the outcome of **SB707**, Weese said.

(Continued)