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"The only way Union can get any justice is to challenge the constitutionality of a law that clearly was targeted at one county," he said.

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Energy, Environment & Natural Resources

BILL CREATING DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY FAILS IN HOUSE ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

■(GIT) Stop-and-go efforts to create a Department of Energy and remove the regulation of the oil and gas industry from the Corporation Commission stopped again Tuesday when a do pass recommendation for the bill was defeated before the House Committee on Energy, Environment and Natural Resources.

While admitting "(I)t will take a lot of work to get this bill on the floor," Rep. Larry Rice, D-Pryor, said he felt the time was right to begin work on the **Senate Bill 793**.

The bill would have moved regulation of the oil and gas industry from the Corporation Commission, along with 304 of the commission's employees, and would have created a Department of Energy to oversee the two industries.

"Whether we do this or (oil and gas) stays in the Corporation Commission," Rice told the committee members, "we know there are going to be some budget problems."

In addition to concerns expressed by committee members, several citizens, particularly mineral rights owners, voiced their opposition to the proposal.

Referring to the proposed department's governing board, mineral owner Mary Piper said the bill "mentions industry and industry and industry," but not mineral owners.

"Without us, without our land and without our minerals, there would be no industry," Piper added. Her comments were supported by other mineral owners and mineral owners association members speaking before the committee.

Of the six audience members to address the committee, only one spoke in the measure's favor: Mike Cantrell, president of the Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association.

Cantrell said the association has once opposed such a proposal, but had reversed that position in February, because he said, "The current system is flawed beyond repair."

Cantrell's support was not enough, and a do pass recommendation for the bill failed. Discussion of the measure ended with the committee agreeing to report its progress.

Tuesday's action was not the first time the bill had faced demise. Earlier this month, Sen. Kevin Easley, D-Broken Arrow, saw the measure fail on the Senate floor by two votes. The bill was reconsidered the next day and passed by a one-vote margin.

In other action before the committee on Wednesday, the following measures received do pass recommendations:

HR1061 by Rep. Wanda Jo Peltier, D-Oklahoma City, praising the work of the Corporation Commission's public utility division in the implementation of the federal telecommunications act;

SB232 by Sen. Easley and Rep. Rice, modifying references in 52 OS 1991, section 1.1, related to natural gas corporations;

SB775 by Sen. Easley and Rep. Rice, related to the Oklahoma Energy Education and Marketing Act and Department of Central Services;

SB777 by Sen. Easley and Rep. Rice, providing for reimbursement for persons engaged in

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