

RYAN LUKE BILL PUT ON HOLD UNTIL MONDAY

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The author of the so-called Ryan Luke child abuse prevention bill again on Wednesday withheld the bill from House consideration.

Rep. Laura Boyd, D-Norman, reiterated again that a discrepancy in projected costs and personnel associated with HB2053 was the reason behind the delay.

"We obviously aren't reading from the same page of the play book," said Boyd.

A House fiscal analysis indicated the bill will cost approximately \$370,000 per year to implement. A Department of Human Services analysis of the legislation, however, put the cost at nearly \$1.4 million and included 20 additional social workers and four supervisors to monitor child abuse cases.

Currently, Boyd noted, DHS has 600

caseworkers who investigate child abuse reports across the state. In addition, the legislature is considering an appropriation that would provide what the Norman Democrat called "a significant number" of additional caseworkers.

"The population of this state will be severely let down, if the governor vetoes this legislation because of a separate political struggle between the executive office and DHS."

Also, Boyd said, the department has 50 vacancies in its caseworker ranks that have already been budgeted by the legislature but have not been filled.

"We realize that DHS needs more caseworkers, and we're working on that," Boyd said. "But their last estimate — that another 24 caseworkers and supervisors are needed besides what we're already negotiating plus their existing vacancies — was just excessive."

Boyd said she expects to have the inconsistency resolved before next week and to present the bill to the full House for its con-

sideration on Monday.

In a related development, Boyd said Governor Frank Keating "appeared to be addressing the wrong measure" when he said on Tuesday he would sign the bill "as long as it addresses recommended changes in the structural system of DHS and the criminal system." The governor made the remark during his weekly press conference.

"The population of this state will be severely let down," Boyd said, "if the governor vetoes this legislation because of a separate political struggle between the executive office and DHS."

The governor, as well as some members of his cabinet, have been critical of DHS and what they have called excessive management. Specifically, the governor's office has endorsed some of the personnel cuts recommended by a private consultant, as well as the governor's own review panel.

The department is currently reviewing the consultant's recommendations, as well as those made by the governor's panel.

GCCA APPROVES MID-TERM FUNDING PLAN

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The legislature's General Conference Committee on Appropriations on Wednesday approved a mid-term funding proposal, taking many at the capitol by surprise.

Considered one the most controversial issues of the legislative session, previously presented plans had taken a beating on the floor of the House and the Senate.

Part of the plan mirrors an allocation agreement announced last week by the legislature's Democratic leadership, calling for some \$13 million to be pulled from the Rainy Day fund for mid-term funding. Another \$1.5 million will be taken from the fund for the establishment of a student identification or tracking system. That plan was also part of the allocation agreement.

Specifically, the plan approved Wednesday calls for \$6,317,545 to be taken from the Rainy Day fund and combined with another \$6,317,545 from the state's general fund to cover mid-term funding costs for the 1994-95 school year.

For the 1995-96 school year, the legislature will again tap the Rainy Day fund for \$6,770,799. An equal amount will also be allocated from the general fund for a total of

\$13,541,598.

No Rainy Day money will be used for 1996-97 mid-term funding, but \$15,082,197 will be drawn from the general fund under the terms of a plan also approved on Wednesday.

The plan for distributing the 1996-97 money would be based on 1.5 percent growth over the highest of the two preceding year average daily membership, plus \$343 per student under 1.5 percent growth.

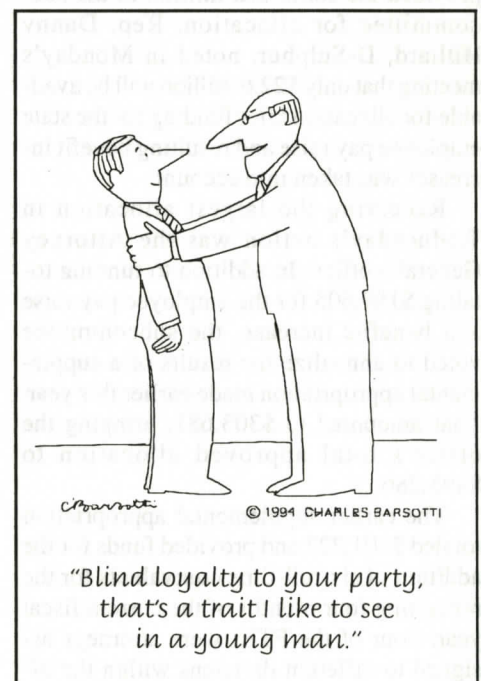
Under the terms of a permanent plan which will take effect with the 1997-98 school year, state aid would be based on the current year's growth and chargeable formula; funds will be set aside to pay for mid-year adjustments do to average daily membership growth; and districts will be allocated state aid beginning in August based on expected chargeable with state aid being adjusted during the year at the time of student growth adjustments on the basis of the most recent year's chargeable numbers.

Data used in the current year formula will take into account current year ad valorem chargeables and the highest of the first nine weeks audited average daily membership or the previous two years average daily membership.

Whether the plan is acceptable to Gov-

ernor Frank Keating is yet to be seen.

The governor indicated for the first time last month that he would consider tapping the Rainy Day fund in an attempt to address the mid-term funding issue. However, the governor cautioned, that move would require a permanent and acceptable solution to the mid-term funding problem.



"Blind loyalty to your party, that's a trait I like to see in a young man."