

FIRST POSTWAR VIETNAMESE STUDENTS TO ATTEND OU

From Oklahoma University

■(NORMAN) Nine Vietnamese college students will be making history when they arrive at the University of Oklahoma May 25.

According to Vietnamese officials, they are the first postwar Vietnamese students who are not refugees or the children of refugees to attend a U.S. college or university.

The nine undergraduate students, all of whom speak English, have completed at least one year of college and are either employees or family members of employees of PetroVietnam, the national petroleum company headquartered in Hanoi. The students are being accompanied to the United States by a representative of the company.

"The University of Oklahoma is proud to provide new opportunities to help expand international understanding by admitting this

group of hard-working students to our university family," said OU President David L. Boren.

Their enrollment at OU came about through contacts made by state and university officials on an October 1995 trade mission to Vietnam. Principal facilitators were Oklahoma Sen. Billy Mickle of Durant; Dr. W. Darrell Gertsch, director of the OU Sarkeys Energy Center; Dr. Eddie Smith, OU vice president for research and dean of the Graduate College; and Dr. James Forgotson, OU geology professor.

Also as a result of the trip, research and training collaborations between the Energy Center and PetroVietnam have been negotiated and are under way.

The visit to Vietnam was the first for Gertsch since he served there as an Air Force pilot during the Vietnamese War.

Majors being pursued by the students include geophysics, business, economics, chemical engineering and petroleum engineering. The students will live in university housing and be encouraged to take part in university activities, Gertsch said. They are being welcomed to the United States with a Memorial Day picnic.

*"Before I was a genius I was a drudge."
Ignace Jan Paderewski*

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the salaries of statewide elected officials to those of certain judges.

The only exception in the law, however, is the governor's office, Steidley noted. The governor's office was left out of the 1994 law because Sens. Jerry Pierce, R-Bartlesville, and Bernice Shedrick, D-Stillwater, were then campaigning for the office.

The law also prevents an elected state official from receiving a pay increase enacted during their term in office. As a result, the increase for statewide elected officials would not take effect until after the 1998 statewide election.

Regardless of the fate of the legislation targeting the governor's office, the remainder of the statewide elected officials taking office after the 1998 election will receive a pay increase if SB804 is signed, several lawmakers noted. The bill passed both the House, 71-27, and the Senate, 38-4, on Thursday.

The amount of those increases will be dependent on the increase received by the judge to which the office is linked.

No legislation specifically addressing an increase in the governor's salary or its relation to other state officials' salaries currently exists, according to a Legislative Information Network search of active bills and active conference committee reports. That means the language would have to be added to a bill and presented as a conference committee substitute.

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"We all know what this bill is about," said Sen. Helen Cole, R-Oklahoma City. "This bill is about J.C. Watts."

The bill's House Author, Rep. Ed Crocker, D-Norman, brought the legislation forward as a result of suspected impropriety surrounding Oklahoma Congressman J.C. Watts. Crocker is a candidate for Oklahoma's Fourth Congressional District, running against Watts.

The former Corporation Commissioner sits on the congressional oversight committee which regulates the country's banking and lending policies. He has been criticized for seeking tax-exempt funds for his private business dealings.

Cole called the bill a "gotcha" measure, saying it was aimed directly at Watts.

"Fair is fair," she said. "Under any other circumstances I'd probably be for this bill, but it is a means to getcha."

Easley said the bill was drafted last year.

"This bill was carried over from last year," he said. "This is not an election year bill."

He said those who choose political life should be prepared to "live in glass houses."

Members barely adopted the bill's conference committee report with a vote of 23 to 22. The bill ultimately passed with a vote of 27 to 19. It now goes to the House for its consideration.



"I say let's just send everything to the Governor. Let him sort it out. Then we can have a nice weekend and worry about it later."