

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY



BUDGET

PAY RAISE EATS PUBLIC SAFETY FUNDS

■(GIT) A Democratic budget accord announced last week was supposed to pump some \$52 million into state agencies dealing with public safety and the judiciary.

But that is not exactly the case, Rep. Danny Hilliard, D-Sulphur, told members of the General Conference Committee's subcommittee on the judicial, public safety and law enforcement services.

Speaking at the subcommittee's first meeting on Monday, Hilliard said only \$22.6 million will be available for allocation after funding for the employee pay raise approved earlier this year and resulting benefit increases are taken into consideration.

"We have 15 agencies," Hilliard added, "who have requested \$174 million."

One of those agencies, Sen. Cal Hobson, D-Lexington, noted is the Department of Corrections, which he called a "monster."

"We weren't given enough money to do what we need to do in the first place," Hobson said. "And we're not in a position to keep up the growth they're expected to experience."

The subcommittee heard from five agencies on Monday, approving allocations for three and delaying action on the remaining two requests.

The subcommittee approved the allocation of \$177,326 for the State Fire Marshal's office. Some \$141,305 of the allocated funds will be used to replace carryover monies used for operations and funding for one vacant fire prevention officer position, with the balance of the funding, \$36,021, being used to fund costs associated with the pay increase.

An allocation of \$345,750 was approved for the Pardon and Parole Board, with \$53,506 of that money being absorbed by the state employee pay raise. Some \$19,552 will be used to cover the costs of benefit increases incurred during the prior year, and \$9,692 will be used to cover costs associated with copying and distributing investigative reports and dockets to board members.

Receiving an allocation approval of \$229,610 was the ABLE Commission. The allocation included \$98,097 associated with the employee pay raise. Increases in the

charge for data processing services from the Office of State Finance will account for \$54,423 of the allocation next fiscal year, while secretarial support for district offices in Oklahoma City, Lawton and Tahlequah will consume some \$77,090.

The subcommittee delayed action on a \$261,576 request for additional funding designed to increase agents' pay within the agency.

Subcommittee members asked for more time to study the request before taking action.

Action on allocation requests from the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs and the Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training were delayed pending presentations from related agencies.

—SHAWN ASHLEY
04/29/96

GCCA SUBCOMMITTEE CHANGES APPROACH

■(GIT) The General Conference Committee on Appropriations' subcommittee on the judiciary, public safety and law enforcement services on Wednesday changed its approach to dealing with agency requests under its jurisdiction.

Subcommittee vice chair Dwayne Steidley, D-Claremore, told the subcommittee's members and the agency directors in attendance that the panel would hear presentations from each agency, but would deal only with the appropriation matters related to the statewide employee pay raise and related benefits. That meant, Steidley explained, that the subcommittee would consider other aspects of the agencies' requests at a later time.

The move brought no objections from the subcommittee's members.

It was the second meeting of the subcommittee, and the attention was on next year's additional revenue, rather than general appropriations.

Receiving the largest allocation in Wednesday's action was the Attorney General's office. In addition to funding totaling \$189,605 for the employee pay raise and benefits increase, the subcommittee voted to annualize the results of a supplemental appropriation made earlier this year. That amounted to \$303,681, bringing the office's total approved allocation to \$493,286.

Those agencies for which funding related

to the employee pay raise was approved included the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, \$116,604; the Workers' Compensation Court, \$131,284; and the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigations, \$291,538.

—SHAWN ASHLEY
05/01/96

CRIME

SPARKS FLY OVER HORSE TRIPPING BILL

■(GIT) The Senate floor was the place for "a bunch of Perry Mason lawyer talk" Wednesday, said Sen. Lewis Long, D-Glenpool, as mostly Republican opposition arose to a section of SB680, the so-called "horse-tripping bill." Through an earlier floor amendment, the bill was modified to include a provision relating to domestic violence. The measure, by Long, was originally aimed at preventing the sports of bear wrestling and horse-tripping, making them felonies.

In a debate that lasted nearly an hour, Senate lawmakers argued over several points of the bill's Conference Committee Report. An issue of some concern is a provision requiring convicted domestic abuse offenders to participate in counseling or treatment, as a condition of suspended sentence.

The provision requires counseling for the defendant, who, at the discretion of the court, may be liable for the cost of those services.

"If both parties don't go to counseling, you have accomplished nothing," said Sen. Dave Herbert, D-Midwest City.

Sen. Keith Leftwich, disagreed with the opposition to the provision, saying it was only an alternative to prison sentencing.

Senate GOP Leader Gerald "Ged" Wright, R-Broken Arrow, said the provision was a way for courts to maintain jurisdiction over domestic violence offenders.

Another provision in the bill includes "a person living in the same household as the defendant" in a list of victims that are protected under the domestic abuse provision of the bill. Those convicted under the provision would be guilty of a felony. It carries a fine of \$3,000. Concerns arose that the language is too broad in nature.

Aimed at such relationships as common law marriages, the provision faced resistance because it "winds up painting a wide brush stroke."