

# STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED

done to make this state a player on the national and international scene."

For his part, Taylor urged the governor "to stop campaigning and begin cooperating."

—SHAWN ASHLEY  
11/06/96

## OKLAHOMA COUNTY PROPELS APPLE TO WIN IN CORPORATION COMMISSION RACE

■(GIT) Republican incumbent Ed Apple won his first election to the Oklahoma Corporation Commission early Wednesday morning, besting former state Democratic Rep. Wanda Jo Peltier in what became one of the most watched, hotly contested and nerve wracking races in the state.

Apple captured 52.3 percent of the vote to Peltier's 47.7 percent of the vote after ballots from Oklahoma County, which accounted for nearly 12 percent of the votes cast in the race were finally counted early Wednesday morning.

A mere 50,206 votes separated the two candidates in the final tally of the statewide race.

—SHAWN ASHLEY  
11/06/96

## STATE PAID TO GET RID OF OLD PLANE

■(GIT) It was supposed to be used as a trade-in, but the state's Department of Public Safety actually paid a Tulsa-based firm to take one of its old aircraft off its hands in the deal that landed a new aircraft for Oklahoma's chief executive.

According to information discovered by House staff, records from the Office of State Finance show that the Department of Public Safety paid \$7,500 to TulsAir Beechcraft, Inc., on Sept. 26 to settle a claim that the Cessna 421-B traded in as part of the deal to acquire Governor Frank Keating's King Air 350 "was not airworthy" and was "inoperative under FAA regulations."

Rep. James Hamilton, D-Poteau and a critic of Keating's use of the aircraft for political and personal purposes, said, "That raises additional serious questions about the bidding process the DPS used to acquire the governor's airplane. Furthermore, the pub-

lic has been provided with no explanation of why the State of Oklahoma would pay money to get rid of an airplane."

Questions about the purchase process that put the plane in a state hangar arose last week when Rep. Russ Roach, D-Tulsa, an outspoken critic of Keating's use of the state-owned plane, asked the State Auditor and Inspector and the Attorney General to look into the matter.

The Department of Public Safety maintains that the purchase of the plane was handled legally and that the lowest and best bidder was selected.

State documents, however, indicate it was the department's intention to trade in the aircraft for credit against the purchase of the new plane.

The first known reference to the purchase of a new aircraft for executive transportation and the trade-in of an older aircraft as part of that acquisition appears in the Fiscal Year 1997 Executive Budget prepared by the governor's office.

In a section entitled "Executive Airlift Support Services" under the portion of the budget proposal dealing with the public safety department, Keating and his staff wrote, "The principal aircraft deployed for airlift support mission has been the department's Cessna 421B; however, this aircraft has come under scrutiny concerning its air worthiness, unreliability, demonstrated mechanical short comings and high maintenance expense. Recommendations in this budget are that the agency upgrade and salvage or sell the Jet Commander (another DPS aircraft) and Cessna 421B as appropriate and acquire by lease-purchase, a new or late model Beechcraft 200 or 350."

Additionally, the public safety department's request for proposals makes note of the plan to trade in those two aircraft, offering the aircraft for trade-in on the proposal form and providing a space on the form for deducting the value of the planes from the cost of the aircraft being acquired.

Despite the fact that the Cessna 421B, which was taken in trade, was declared "not airworthy" and "inoperative under FAA regulations" sometime after the state's purchase of the new plane was completed, Department of Public Safety flight logs indicate that the governor flew on the aircraft 91 times in 11 months, including as recently as June 18, one month before the purchase

of the King Air 350, Hamilton said.

Ironically, a provision of the bill which provided funding for the purchase of the new plane, SB837, requires legislative approval before the plane can be disposed of in any way, such as selling the aircraft or using it as a trade-in during the purchase of another plane.

—SHAWN ASHLEY  
11/05/96

## FIERY DEMOCRATS CAUCUS, ELECT PRO TEMPORE

■(GIT) Sixty-five fiery House Democrats caucused Thursday, dividing their time between serious legislative and caucus matters and attacks on Republicans, particularly the governor.

It was during the speaker pro tempore nomination speeches that the Democratic lawmakers' feelings began to be made known.

"We have just endured one of the most vicious political onslaughts in history," Rep. Dwayne Steidley, D-Claremore, said in his endorsement of Rep. Larry Adair, D-Stilwell, who went on to be elected speaker pro tempore, "and we have emerged with our integrity and a new sense of purpose to pursue a common sense, progressive agenda, which we will dare the governor to veto if he has the audacity to do so."

Adair pointed his finger squarely at the governor, accusing him of leading the assault against Democratic lawmakers.

Rep. Jack Begley, D-Goodwell and Adair's challenger for the post, called the recent election a learning experience, particularly for his family.

"My family learned I voted to have condoms passed out to homosexuals, to release prisoners from prison to raise millions of dollars of fees, against teachers and small business and the taxpayers, apple pie and Chevrolet," Begley said.

That type of campaigning, Begley said, had to be stopped, adding that he was willing to sponsor legislation aimed at requiring political advertising be true and disclose from where certain information came.

By secret ballot, Adair won the post by a vote of 35 to 30.

Representative Loyd Benson, D-Frederick, who was named Speaker of the House-designate by acclamation during the caucus, also took the governor to task, ac-

*Continued on next page*

*"A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval."*

*Mark Twain*