

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



tion department some \$6 million of the \$116.5 million appropriated in SB800. Citing the governor's veto of SB1100, which provided the mechanism for the expenditure of some of the funds appropriated in SB800, the Office of State Finance "has closed that money off to us. We don't have access to it," Garrett explained in June.

The veto affected not only the expenditure of the \$4.3 million allocated to staff development, but also \$900,000 for teacher stipends, \$500,000 for arts and humanities institutions and \$250,000 for Great Expectations grants.

The governor's veto of SB1100 also affected the proposed pay raises for career teachers, which the governor has said he supports. Like the continuing teacher training programs, SB1100 outlined the way in which the money appropriated for the salaries was to be spent at the district level, adding steps 16 to 25 to the teacher salary ladder with each step accompanied by a \$332 annual raise. The governor's veto effectively eliminated the additional steps.

State Finance Director Tom Daxon, however, said the \$13 million appropriated for career teachers' salaries in SB800 is not directed at the state level by SB1100.

"It goes to the school districts," Daxon said. "It's a form of deregulation because their hands are not tied as to how they can spend it."

During his appearance before the Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators, several career teachers in the audience complained to Keating that they had not received raises, despite the appropriation of funds to their local districts.

—SHAWN ASHLEY
10/30/96

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

REFORM PARTY SUES STATE ELECTION BOARD

■(GIT) The Reform Party of Oklahoma filed suit in federal district court on Monday against the state election board, alleging that the board and its members acted illegally when they failed to have new voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications printed that included the party as a recognized party.

The suit accuses the defendants of unlawful, discriminatory, arbitrary and capricious behavior in relationship to the Republican and Democratic parties by failing to print proper voter registration forms and for failure to properly instruct Oklahoma tag agents, their employees and other voter registrars on how to assist voters in registering as members of the Reform Party of Oklahoma. Named as defendants in the suit are Oklahoma State Election Board Secretary Lance Ward; board chairwoman Glo Henley, board vice chair Kenneth Monroe, board member Mona Lambird and the state election board.

Specifically, the suit, which is based on state and federal equal protection statutes, alleges that the defendants failed to inform tag agents and other voter registrars that the Reform Party of Oklahoma existed under the law, failed to list the Reform Party on official voter registration application forms, failed to list the Reform Party on absentee ballot application forms, failed to inform voters of their right to register as Reform Party members and failed to amend public notices in places of voter registration to list the Reform Party as a legal party in Oklahoma.

"The underlying issue related to this suit is that, with the failure of the State Election Board to even notify tag agencies and other state registrars of the legal existence of the Reform Party, let alone to provide them with the necessary forms and instructions on how people could actually register, it was impossible for us to begin to build our party rolls even though last spring nearly 78,000 Oklahomans signed a petition that made the Reform Party legal, said Dale Barlow, chairwoman of the Reform Party of Oklahoma. "These actions by established politicians who control registration procedures have resulted in the ability for Republicans and Democrats to call all their members to get out the vote when we, the Reformers — their new competition — have been denied the same ability because we have been left with virtually no one to call."

The suit, which is being handled by Tulsa attorney Jim Linger, who was described by one Reform Party member as a "ballot access specialist," asks the court to:

- ✓ Declare the election board's actions unconstitutional;
- ✓ Issue preliminary and permanent injunctions as may be necessary to end the unconstitutional actions;

- ✓ Issue writs of prohibition and mandamus against state election board officials and personnel, requiring that voter registration forms, absentee ballot applications and voter registration notices that fail to identify the Reform Party as a recognized party in Oklahoma be destroyed and replaced;

- ✓ Award reasonable costs and expenses to the party, including attorneys' fees; and

- ✓ Provide further relief to which the party is deemed to be entitled and is found to be equitable by the court.

A hearing date for the suit had not been set at presstime. Additionally, Ward said he had not yet been served notice of the suit's filing. As a result, Ward withheld comment until he had time to review the suit.

Earlier this month, Ward explained to *Capitol Network News* the reason the forms did not contain the two parties' names.

First, he said, the parties were recognized in June, when only a few days would be open for new voters to register. Voter registry books were then closed from late August to early October because of ongoing elections, including the Aug. 27 statewide primary and the Sept. 17 primary runoff. The longest time during which new voters could register since the parties' recognition lasted two weeks, beginning in late September and ending Oct. 11. Secondly, Ward said, more than one million voter registration forms were already printed and in the hands of voter registrars, including not only tag agents, but also party officials, student groups, civic groups and others.

Those factors, combined with the fact that each party's presidential candidate must capture at least 10 percent of the vote in the general election to remain on the ballot as recognized political parties, made it impractical to reprint the forms, Ward said.

—SHAWN ASHLEY
10/28/96

HOUSE STAFF REPORT SAYS GOVERNOR'S REIMBURSEMENT RATE TOO LOW

■(GIT) A study conducted by the fiscal director of the Oklahoma House of Representatives concludes that the rate of reimbursement for Governor Frank Keating's use of a state-owned airplane for political events may be too low.

The study, conducted at the request of Rep. Russ Roach, D-Tulsa, by House fiscal

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