

# Capitol Network News

Today's news from Oklahoma's best government information resource

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## REP. LAURA BOYD MEETS WITH HOME SCHOOL ADVOCATES, DISCUSS POSSIBLE REGULATIONS

By Shawn Ashley  
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Home school advocates told an Oklahoma lawmaker Monday that a system is already in place to verify that parents who claim to be home schooling their children are living up to that obligation and that no additional regulations are needed.

"I don't think (any additional regulation) is necessary," Joe Esposito, a home schooling parent from Owasso, told Rep. Laura Boyd, D-Norman, during a meeting at the state capitol Monday. Citing Tulsa County as an example, Esposito said district attorneys, under the state's truancy laws, have the ability to verify that a student is being home schooled.

"The system is in place. It does work. It just needs to be implemented properly," said Esposito.

Boyd called the meeting after some state officials, including Governor Frank Keating, suggested that some regulations may be needed to verify that parents who claim to be home schooling their children are living up to the obligation and to prevent abusive

parents from using home schooling as a shield from child abuse investigations.

The issue arose in the report of a task force appointed by the governor to review the case of Shane Coffman, an eight-year-old Cleveland County boy who authorities claim was beaten to death by his mother and her boyfriend. The child's partially decomposed body was found in February buried in a freezer outside a trailer once occupied by the boy and his siblings, his mother and her boyfriend.

According to members of the task force, the Department of Human Services and law enforcement officials backed away from their investigations into the case after being told the boy was being home schooled. That led the governor's task force to conclude, "In this case, home schooling was used to effectively hide the death of one child and the abuse of several others from those who were attempting to investigate their abuse. The public policy which allows for home school-

ing in the absence of any oversight needs to be critically examined."

Governor Keating said during a Nov. 1 press conference, "If there has been a history of abuse and neglect, I think someone should go out there and say, 'Where's the blackboard or crayons.' I don't think any home schooling parent would object to that, and I would support legislation that did that."

Nearly 20 home school advocates, primarily home schooling parents, participated in Monday's meeting; some brought their children. Like Esposito, the majority expressed concern over the idea of imposing some sort of regulation on home schooling.

Scott Somerville, an attorney representing home schooling parents for the Virginia-based Home School Defense Association, agreed with Esposito, adding that the efforts of Tulsa County prosecutors to verify parents' home schooling claims needed to be

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## SENATE PANEL DISCUSSES LANGUAGE LEGISLATION

By Shawn Ashley  
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Members of a Senate interim study committee were urged Monday to consider adopting legislation that would make English the state government's official language.

"Fluency in the English language will do more to empower people coming to America — and Oklahoma — than any government service that may be provided to them in their first language," Mauro E. Mujica, chairman of the board and chief executive officer for U.S. English, told the interim study committee on English as an official language (96S-105). The organization describes itself as "the largest national, non-partisan, non-profit citizens' action group dedicated to preserving the unifying role of the English language in the United States."

"Unfortunately," Mujica added, "the effect of many of the government's well-intentioned multilingual programs is to handicap those very people these programs are designed to help. The programs destroy the

incentive to learn English by sending the message to newcomers that you don't have to learn English to succeed. The fact of the matter is that you do need to know and to master English to succeed in America."

Mujica called English "the catalyst that has brought us together as Americans." Legislation adopting the language as the state's official language, he added, "encourages newcomers to learn English, while at the same time establishes a common-sense language policy for the government."

At the same time, Mujica said, any legislation should allow reasonable exceptions that would allow some services to be provided in languages other than English, such as public health, safety and emergency services, judicial proceedings, education to students with limited English proficiencies and foreign language instruction.

Twenty-three states, Mujica said, have adopted legislation designating English as their official language, while similar efforts

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replicated across the state.

"Do you know what they do in Oklahoma County?" Somerville asked. "Nothing. But the fact is it's against the law for a child not to receive an education, either in the public schools, private school or at home."

Somerville called the interaction between home schooling parents and social workers "a recipe for disaster," pointing largely to the distrust that exists on both sides of the relationship. Instead of dealing with social workers, Somerville said home schooling parents would be better served by the adversarial relationship with law enforcement officers or prosecutors, framed within the context of one's constitutional rights.

Somerville cited the efforts of Virginia to codify such a relationship. In that case, information obtained by a social worker cannot be used against an individual in a court proceeding. That, he said, puts the burden on social workers and law enforcement officers to ensure that individuals' constitutional rights are properly protected and that a search warrant be obtained in order to gather evidence for use in a criminal proceeding.

Somerville told *Capitol Network News* following the meeting, "There's not a single state in the country where the laws concerning home schooling could have deterred the death of Shane Coffman."

Rev. Johnny Hinton, a home schooling parent from Wewoka, expressed a similar sentiment, noting that states which regulate home schooling, such as Wisconsin, do so on the basis of the education being provided, rather than on the basis of child welfare or protection.

"If anyone is interested in protecting children, it is the people who have chosen this route," Hinton added to the agreement of those in attendance.

Mike Jestes, a home schooling parent from Oklahoma City, said those involved in home schooling could do more to educate the public about their efforts, adding, "At the

present time, I see no reason to do anything intrusive because it is working and working well."

Education and information about home schooling, Somerville also said, are important, particularly for public officials who deal with parents and children in their day-to-day duties.

## English, continued from page 1

have passed the House in Oklahoma — HB1385 in 1994 and HB2154 in 1995 — but have failed or died in the Senate.

Mujica faced sometimes harsh questioning from members of the Senate committee and even harsher criticism from some in the audience.

Sen. Keith Leftwich, D-Oklahoma City, asked what impact such legislation would have on multilingual efforts already approved by the legislature, such as allowing drivers' license tests to be offered in Spanish, as well as five other languages. Mujica said most legislation would not impact such efforts, because drivers' license tests are usually one of the exemptions provided for in the bills.

"I agree," said Mujica, "that we have to give some time for immigrants to this country to assimilate, but we also have to have an incentive for them to learn English. If people had been able to keep their original languages, this country would not have been built."

The difference now, Mujica added during further questioning, is that lawmakers have unintentionally eliminate the incentive for immigrants to learn English by making so many services available in immigrants' native languages. Additionally, he said, that has led a growing number of immigrants to refuse to learn English.

Asked by Leftwich whether it might be easier to repeal existing laws that mandate certain government services be provided in a variety of languages, Mujica said doing so would create the risk of a claim of discrimination by those who saw their native language eliminated from the list of those used in government services.

"There is no existing equilibrium," Mujica said. "By accommodating and doing things in a number of languages, you are already discriminating against some."

Mujica's views were particularly not well received by those in the audience.

Barbara Warner, from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, said efforts such as that promoted by U.S. English threatened bilingual education funding, and in turn, the contin-

ued existence of Native American languages.

"My tribe," she said, "has only 2,300 members. When we die, that language is going to die, while Spanish and German and others will continue to live on."

Bilingual education, she said, promotes language preservation and the likelihood that the Ponca Tribe's language would continue to exist.

Oklahoma City attorney Teresa Rondon disputed Mujica's claim that current laws discourage immigrants from learning English. Citing her personal experiences as an English instructor, Rondon said English as a second language courses "are the most well attended in Oklahoma City. Hispanic parents want their children to learn English because they know it is the key to their success in this country."

Mujica noted the irony of the criticism of the efforts of himself and of the organization he heads, explaining that he, too, is an immigrant.

"I, too, an immigrant — I came here from Chile some 31 years ago to study architecture at Columbia University — and know firsthand how important it is to know English to succeed in the United States," he said.

Committee chairman Sen. Ben Brown, D-Oklahoma City, noted that the panel is neither currently looking at any one piece of legislation or at drafting English as an official language legislation. He did note, however, that such legislation is expected to come before lawmakers during the 46th Legislature.

*"It is a fact attested in history that sometimes revolutions most disastrous to freedom are effected without the shedding of blood. The substance of your government may be taken away, while the form and the shadow remain to you."*

Andrew Johnson  
speech in Washington, D.C.  
Feb. 22, 1866

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## SENATORS CALL FOR WORK COMP RATE CUT

By Shawn Ashley  
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The state lawmaker who will carry the results of a special commission looking at Oklahoma's workers' compensation system next year and other legislators joined together Monday to call on the State Board of Property and Casualty Rates to cut workers' compensation rates again this year.

Citing new statistics he said showed the positive impact of recent reforms, Sen. Jim Maddox, D-Lawton, said, "The numbers we've seen indicate the reforms of recent years are working and workers' compensation costs are coming down. We want the board to pass the savings on to Oklahoma business owners, and the quicker, the better."

Maddox, who has agreed to carry the workers' comp reform bill based on the recommendations of Lt. Governor Mary Fallin's Commission on Workers' Compensation before the 46th Legislature, was joined in the call by senators Stratton Taylor, D-Claremore and President Pro Tempore of the Senate; Trish Weedn, D-Purcell; Lewis Long, D-Glenpool; Penny Williams, D-Tulsa; Bruce Price, D-Chickasha; Brad Henry, D-Shawnee; Dick Wilkerson, D-Atwood; Frank Shurden, D-Henryetta; Robert Kerr, D-Altus; Gilmer Capps, D-Snyder; Larry Dickerson, D-Poteau; J. Barry Harrison, D-Fairfax; Sam Helton, D-Lawton; and Angela Monson, D-Tulsa.

The legislators cited a new Senate staff analysis, entitled "Workers' Compensation in Oklahoma: Recent Reforms and Results," which reviewed the impact of 30 workers' compensation reforms approved by the legislature in the last four years. Among the findings:

- Citing legislative reforms earlier this year, an independent actuary recommended a workers' comp rate reduction of as high as 14 percent, but only a 4.5 percent reduction was implemented by the State Board of Property and Casualty Rates;

- Workers' comp filings have decreased eight percent since a reform package, which included stiffer fraud penalties, workplace safety initiatives and so-called "dueling doctor" reforms, was passed in a 1994 special session;

- Fraud charges have increased by 37 percent in the last year with 92 percent of the cases ending in guilty pleas;

- The use of the independent medical examiner has increased by 42 percent from 1994; and

- More than 40,000 workers are currently enrolled in workplace medical plans designed to contain workers' comp premium costs.

"I think we've got a pretty strong arsenal of evidence to argue for another cut in workers' comp rates," said Maddox. "Based on the numbers, it's pretty clear that businesses are being charged too much and deserve some relief."

The Lawton lawmaker said one of the most compelling reasons for another reduction is the testimony of an independent actuary delivered in January. Maddox said the fact that only a fraction of his recommendation for reducing rates was implemented is significant. Additionally, the actuary testified in his report that more reductions would

be warranted as reforms took effect in the months to come.

"Things have only gotten better since that testimony was delivered, so I think the logical conclusion is rates should come down even more," he said. "It takes a while for reforms to have an impact on the marketplace, but we're starting to see signs that they are having a positive influence."

"We are definitely on the right track, but we must not let up," Maddox added. "Between 1990 and 1992, workers' compensation premiums increased by 62 percent in the private sector. Even with the enactment of the reforms of the last several years, we have a long way to go before rates are where we want them to be."

## STATE PARTIALLY REIMBURSED FOR KEATING POLITICAL FLIGHTS

By Shawn Ashley  
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The Department of Public Safety has been partially reimbursed for some "purely political" flights taken by Governor Frank Keating since the department acquired a new plane for the use of the executive branch earlier this year, information provided to House of Representatives staff indicates.

Department commissioner and state Secretary of Public Safety Bob Ricks informed the House staff last week that his department has received \$5,902 for Keating's use of the state airplane to attend partisan political events. Keating's use of the plane for such events has become the subject of much controversy. The governor revealed in September that he used the plane to attend what he called some "purely political events," and that he would ask those involved in those events to reimburse the state for the fuel used to attend the various functions.

Almost two-thirds of the nearly \$6,000 reimbursed to the state, \$3,600, was repayment for the governor's trip to the GOP national convention in San Diego and for his flight to the North Dakota Republican convention in March, which involved a leased aircraft.

Meanwhile, a Senate staff member confirmed Monday that Senate Speaker Pro Tempore Stratton Taylor, D-Claremore, and House Speaker-elect Rep. Loyd Benson, D-Frederick, will appoint a joint committee to consider whether there should be changes in the state policy concerning airplane use. A formal announcement of the panel's for-

mation is not expected until sometime next week or perhaps later.

Keating and Ricks, citing state statutes and a legal analysis prepared by the governor's chief deputy counsel, have said it is the Department of Public Safety's responsibility to provide security and transportation to the governor at all times. At the request of lawmakers, the attorney general and auditor and inspector are looking into the matter.

The attorney general is expected to rule on whether it is legal for the governor to use the plane for personal and political trips, while the auditor and inspector is expected to determine what rate of reimbursement would be appropriate for the plane's usage for trips not related to state business. Both may address the acquisition of the plane, which some lawmakers have charged may have been improperly conducted.

Ricks refute that allegation, going so far as to say in an interview with *Capitol Network News* that his staff deserves a commendation for their work.

"I would love to see this whole thing reviewed, because I think everyone would then see that the Department of Public Safety staff involved in obtaining the new plane deserves a commendation," Ricks said. "They got the best deal possible for the state."

*"Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe."*

H.G. Wells

*The Outline of History, 1920*



## WATKINS WINS WAYS & MEANS SEAT

By Shawn Ashley  
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Oklahoma's Third District pseudo-freshman Congressman Wes Watkins got what he bargained for Friday after winning election to the House of Representatives in this month's general election — a seat on the prestigious Ways and Means Committee.

Watkins, who represented the district for 14 years as a Democrat, was one of two Republican freshmen, named to fill three open slots on the panel, which is heavily involved in tax writing.

During his campaign, Watkins admitted that a promise of a slot on the committee from House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Georgia, played a role in his move from independent — the banner under which he sought the state's governorship in 1994 — to Republican. His conversion to independent followed 14 years as a Democratic representative for the district and a failed 1990 bid for party's gubernatorial nomination.

"I can't see myself outside that room, trying to get my voice heard for the Third District," Watkins said, referring to the promise of the position with the committee when he officially announced his bid for the congressional seat July 1.

State Sen. Darryl Roberts, D-Ardmore, attempted to make that promise a campaign issue in the contest for the seat, branding Watkins an "opportunist."

In his July 1 announcement, Watkins said, "If I were a political opportunist, I would be running as a Democrat. But the national Democratic Party is controlled by extreme liberals and does not represent Oklahoma's traditional conservative and moral values."



## VA EXPANDS OUTREACH TO SEXUAL TRAUMA VICTIMS

From U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs

■(WASHINGTON) The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding efforts to reach out to women veterans who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military.

VA recently publicized its national toll-free number, reminding women veterans who need information on sexual trauma counseling and treatment, and filing claims for disability compensation to call VA's toll-free number — 1-800-827-1000.

The department activated the number after normal business hours in connection with the Nov. 15 airing of ABC's 20/20 which featured two segments on rape in the military. More than 2,000 calls were received. Although not all were related to sexual trauma, VA staff were able to assist a number of women veterans who needed counseling and referrals to the nearest VA facility or community resource.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown said, "It is important that women veterans know that there is help available to them. The

experience of sexual trauma can have a tremendous impact on a person's physical and emotional health. VA has a cadre of professionals who can help women cope with sexual trauma so they can regain their confidence, self-esteem and quality of life."

Women veterans who call the toll-free number seeking assistance are routed to the regional office women veteran coordinators who can provide information and assist in referrals to VA medical centers or Readjustment Counseling Service Veterans Outreach Centers (Vet Centers). Male veterans are referred to the nearest VA facility with a post-traumatic stress disorder program or to the nearest Vet Center.

Legislation signed in 1992 authorized VA to provide priority counseling and treatment to eligible women veterans to overcome trauma resulting from sexual assault, battery or harassment while on active military duty. More recent legislation extended that authority and made it gender-neutral so that VA can provide these services to male and female veterans.

## LAND SECRETARY WITHDRAWS PURCHASE, SEEKS AG'S OPINION

By Shawn Ashley  
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The top administrator of the state's School Land Commission said Monday that he plans to ask the commission to drop his purchase of a parcel of commission-owned land and to seek an attorney general's opinion on the legality of such a purpose.

Speaking to reporters only minutes before a scheduled meeting of the commission, secretary Rob Johnson told reporters of his plans to withdraw from the purchase of a 160-acre parcel of land in Pawnee County and to seek a ruling from the attorney general.

According to published reports, Johnson, who was appointed to the post in 1995 by Governor Frank Keating and previously served in the state House of Representatives, bought the land through a third party, a Tulsa Realtor, for \$99,000. The land includes a 22-acre lake and is located approximately five miles west of Pawnee.

The commission decided last year to sell more than one-half of the land it holds in trust for the state school system over a 12 to 15-year period, to keep from driving prices down.

Money from the sale of the land will be invested, where commission members said

they believed they would receive a higher rate of return over the revenue generated by leasing the land.

Until last December, the commission's own rules prevented its employees or members from buying land it offered for sale. Those rules were changed during a meeting 11 months ago.

Although the matter was discussed during Monday's commission meeting, the commissioners did not address Johnson's request to drop his plan to purchase the land, because the issue was not a part of the commission's posted agenda.

*"We do not base a choice on the goodness of democracy, which may be doubtful, but solely on the evilness of a dictatorship, which is certain. Not only because the dictator is bound to make bad use of his power, but because a dictator, even if he were benevolent, would rob all others of their responsibility, and thus of their human rights and duties."*

Sir Karl Popper  
"Popper on Democracy"  
The Economist, April 23, 1988



## PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES FOOD RECOVERY POLICY

### From U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

■(WASHINGTON) The Clinton Administration put the emphasis on the "thanks" and the "giving" last week as the President announced that it would be the federal government's policy to promote and to practice gleaning and food recovery.

In his weekly radio address last Saturday President Clinton said he will sign a directive making it his administration's policy to promote food recovery and to assure that no wholesome food goes to waste that can be provided to those in need. The President directed every federal agency to actively work to recover surplus food from their cafeterias, commissaries, public events and other food service facilities and to encourage state, local, and non-governmental partners and grantees to participate.

The President also announced that the Department of Agriculture would release "A Citizen's Guide to Food Recovery" — a guidebook for getting prepared, perishable food that would otherwise be thrown away to those people who need it.

"The Bible tells us that when we harvest, we must not take everything for ourselves, but remember to leave something for the poor to glean. Today, those gleanings are the gifts of food we give to the less fortunate among us," President Clinton said in his weekly radio address. "Across our nation, in food banks and houses of worship and community groups, thousands of Americans are taking the initiative to fight hunger and feed their neighbors. We must do our part and support their efforts, because the job is far from finished."

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said, "On Oct. 1, the President signed the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, which encourages food donation by limiting the liability of good-faith donors and by providing basic nationwide uniform definitions pertaining to donation and distribution of nutritious foods. Such initiatives empower communities to solve the food shortage problem experienced by their low income residents.

"The resource guide will make it easier for individuals, groups, and businesses to get involved in gleaning and food recovery efforts, nationally and in their own communities. It will provide information on starting such an effort and give names and addresses of charities involved in these efforts," Glickman said.

The President also established an inter-

agency task force on gleaning and food recovery to carry out the new policy and to assist agencies with food recovery efforts. Glickman will chair the working group comprised of all federal agencies.

In his remarks, the President also praised the AmeriCorps members who devoted their summer to gleaning and food recovery activities. As directed by Glickman, the USDA AmeriCorps members gleaned at the Olympics and in communities across the country — recovering more than one thousand tons of food, providing over 1.3 million meals.

As part of his continuing efforts, Glickman:

- Established a toll free number (1-800 GLEAN IT) to facilitate food recovery efforts;

- Sponsored four farmers' markets (and a fifth Tuesday) where at the end of the day, the D.C. Central Kitchen recovered about 800 pounds of food not sold and distributed it to needy families in Washington, D.C.;

- Hosted a national round table to discuss food recovery and two regional meetings to talk about dismantling barriers to food donation.

Citizens can obtain "A Citizen's Guide to Food Recovery" by calling 1-800-GLEAN IT.

## TRADE SCHOOL OPERATORS PLEAD GUILTY TO FRAUD AND CONSPIRACY

### From U.S. Dept. of Education

■(WASHINGTON) The president and CEO of a national chain of computer schools has pleaded guilty to felony charges filed in Akron, Ohio.

Irwin Mautner, of Greenwich, Conn., was charged with mail fraud, conspiracy to defraud the U.S. Department of Education, and making a false statement in connection with a matter within the jurisdiction of the department. Each violation carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and/or a \$250,000 fine.

Mautner was the head of Programming and Systems, Inc. (PSI), headquartered in New York. PSI operated vocational schools in Baltimore; Charlotte, NC; Cleveland; Columbus, Ohio; Flint, MI; Indianapolis; Miami; New York; Philadelphia; Southfield, MI; and Washington, DC. The schools closed in 1992 and 1993.

From July 1988 through Sept. 1993 — the period covered by the indictment — PSI schools received federally insured student loans totaling more than \$100 million and Federal Pell Grant funds totaling more than \$41 million. The indictment charged that Mautner participated in a scheme to defraud the Education Department by concealing the high rate of student withdrawals at PSI schools in order to prevent the schools from losing their accreditation, and consequently, the schools' eligibility to receive federally insured loans and grants.

PSI was a publicly traded corporation, which at one time had more than 3.6 million shares of stock outstanding and annual revenues in excess of \$31 million.

Mautner had previously consented in

Dec. 1994 to civil penalties imposed by the Securities and Exchange Commission in connection with false financial statements submitted to the commission.

Mautner, PSI National Financial Aid Director Ronald Sundick, and the corporation were indicted in Cleveland on Aug. 13, 1996, by a federal grand jury for the Northern District of Ohio. In a plea agreement with the government, Sundick pleaded guilty on Nov. 14, 1996, to a one count information that charged him with violation of Title 18, United States Code 1516, Obstruction of a Federal Audit.

Mautner and Sundick are scheduled to be sentenced early next year.

Assistant United States Attorney James C. Lynch presented the plea before Federal District Court Judge Sam Bell.

In reaction to the pleas, Education Department Inspector General Thomas Bloom said, "We are pleased with the progress of the PSI investigation. The Office of Inspector General is committed to a continuation of aggressive investigations of individuals who commit fraud in education programs. Neither taxpayers nor students can afford fraudulent activities in programs designed to help those who are ultimately victimized by those same activities."

The case was investigated by the Cleveland office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Education Office of Inspector General in Pittsburgh.

*"It takes time to save time."*

*Joe Taylor*



## NEW PROGRAM HELPS STUDENT ATHLETES AVOID STEROIDS USE

### From National Institutes of Health

■(WASHINGTON) A new drug prevention and education program called ATLAS (Adolescents Training and Learning to Avoid Steroids) is extremely effective in preventing use of anabolic steroids among high school athletes, according to a study published in the Nov. 20, 1996 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The study demonstrated that students in the ATLAS program had enhanced healthy behaviors, reduced factors that encourage steroid use, and lower intent to use steroids. The ATLAS program, created by scientists at the Oregon Health Sciences University and led by Dr. Linn Goldberg, was funded by a research grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institutes of Health.

"This is the first prevention study that has focused on the abuse of anabolic steroids," said Dr. Alan I. Leshner, Director of NIDA. "The results are promising, with the potential to have a long-term impact of health of young people and on their use of drugs such as steroids."

The ATLAS program includes seven 50-minute classes led by coaches and student team leaders. These sessions focus on the effects of steroids, sports nutrition, and strength training alternatives to steroids use. Students also participate in drug refusal role playing and learn about anti-steroids media messages. In addition to the classes there are seven weight room sessions taught by Oregon Health Sciences University research staff. Information is also distributed to parents, and they were invited to a discussion session.

"ATLAS is a very unique approach to dealing with the problem of steroid use among athletes. It involves a team-approach that empowers student athletes to make the right choices through education. And we now know it works," comments Dr. Goldberg.

The randomized, prospective study involved 1,506 football players/students from 31 different high schools. This year-long study was the first study to use coaches as members of the drug prevention team. Students filled out confidential questionnaires immediately before and after participating in the ATLAS program and then again approximately 12 months later to measure the effectiveness of the program.

Compared to student athletes who were not exposed to the ATLAS program, ATLAS participants had increased understanding of

the effects of steroids, greater belief in personal vulnerability to the consequences of steroid use, improved drug refusal skills, less belief in steroid-promoting media messages, increased belief in the team as an information source, improved perception of athletic abilities and strength training self-efficacy, improved nutrition and exercise behaviors and reduced intentions to use steroids.

In the 1995 Monitoring the Future Study, conducted under NIDA funding by the University of Michigan, about 2% of students in the 8th, 10th, and 12th grades had used anabolic steroids at least once in their lives.

## GROUP B STREP VACCINE SHOWS PROMISE IN CLINICAL STUDIES

### From National Institutes of Health

■(WASHINGTON) A major step toward developing a vaccine to prevent infections with Group B streptococci bacteria, an important cause of infant disease and death, has been reported by researchers supported by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). The study results appear in the Nov. 15, 1996, issue of *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*.

An experimental vaccine against one type of Group B strep stimulated strong immune responses in human volunteers. Later, in laboratory experiments, antibodies isolated from the volunteers neutralized the same type of Group B strep bacteria and prevented infection in newborn mice that were exposed to it.

"We are very excited about this important clinical finding," says Pamela McInnes, D.D.S., project officer for NIAID's Group B Streptococcal Initiative, a program begun in 1992 to develop a Group B strep vaccine. "This work provides the most promising evidence to date that we're getting closer to finding an effective vaccine."

Ten to 30 percent of all women are asymptomatic carriers of Group B strep, harboring the bacteria in their genital tracts. During childbirth, the bacteria is transmitted to approximately half of all infants born to these women. Nearly two of every 1,000 infants in the United States develop invasive infections, which can cause pneumonia, meningitis and other serious illnesses, usually within the first three months of life. Half of all infants who develop Group B strep meningitis experience long-term neurologic problems, including seizure disorders and mental retardation. About 10 percent of infected infants die.

Anabolic steroids are synthetic derivatives of the male hormone testosterone. Their use, by athletes and others, increases lean muscle mass, strength, and the ability to train longer and harder. However, anabolic steroids use can produce severe physical and emotional side effects. For adolescents, a serious side effect can be premature skeletal maturation, or stunted growth. Other risks include severe acne, trembling, high blood pressure, jaundice, and liver tumors. In addition, clinical depression often occurs when use of anabolic steroids is stopped, a factor which may lead to dependence.

"Studies have shown that babies who get Group B strep disease are born to women who lack antibodies to the bacteria," explains Dennis L. Kasper, M.D., lead author of the current study. "The good news, however, is that women who have antibodies to Group B strep pass those antibodies to their infants during pregnancy. Those antibodies protect the infants from infection after they are born."

For more than a decade, Dr. Kasper and his colleagues at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston have tried to develop a vaccine that would protect infants from Group B strep by stimulating the production of antibodies in pregnant women. Theoretically, the maternal immunity generated by such a vaccine would cross the placental membranes and protect the newborn for the first few months of its life, when most Group B strep disease occurs.

The Group B strep bacterium is enveloped in a complex sugar molecule called a polysaccharide capsule. Because it is known to play a key role in stimulating the production of antibodies to Group B strep, the capsule is a logical vaccine candidate. However, previous studies supported by NIAID found that immunization with the purified capsule molecule produced insufficient amounts of antibody in human volunteers. Those studies led Dr. Kasper and his colleagues to try to boost the vaccine's performance by chemically linking, or conjugating, the capsule to tetanus toxoid, a protein that has been used to increase the immune-stimulating properties of several other vaccines.

In the current study the researchers compared this so-called conjugate vaccine with its predecessor. Under the direction of Carol J. Baker, M.D., an NIAID-funded investi-

See *Strep Vaccine*, page 7



## PROSTATE CANCER GENE LOCATION FOUND ON CHROMOSOME 1

From National Center  
for Human Genome Research

■(BETHESDA, MD) Researchers at the National Center for Human Genome Research (NCHGR), Johns Hopkins University (JHU) and Umea University, Umea, Sweden, have identified the location of the first major gene that predisposes men to prostate cancer. The gene, named HPC-1 (hereditary prostate cancer 1) by the researchers, is situated on the long arm of chromosome 1. The finding, to be published in the Nov. 22 issue of the

journal *Science*, is the first proof that genes conferring hereditary predisposition to prostate cancer exist.

Scientists discovered the gene location through an international study involving 91 families in which at least three members suffered from prostate cancer. The region implicated represents about 0.3 percent of the human genome and will now be the subject of intense scrutiny to identify the gene responsible. Once the HPC-1 gene itself is identified, it is expected to shed light on how and why prostate cancer develops and also suggest strategies for preventing and treating it.

"The application of genetic tools to the understanding of common disorders is becoming a state-of-the-art strategy in biomedical research," said Donna Shalala, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Discoveries such as this one continue to bear out the wisdom of our national investment in genetics technology for understanding human illness."

Although the disease has been known to run in families, genetic analyses of prostate cancer have been difficult. In the United States, men stand a one-in-five chance of developing prostate cancer; the most common malignancy among men and the cause of more than 40,000 deaths annually. That indicates many different factors, genetic and environmental, may contribute to the disease. A high-fat diet, cigarette smoking, and multiple sexual partners are among the environmental suspects, but none has definitely been established as a risk factor. In addition, nearly all prostate cancer is diagnosed late in life, so an affected man's ancestors are rarely available for studies that might explain the part genes play in the disease.

Approximately 1 in every 500 men is believed to possess an altered version of the gene. The researchers estimate that alterations in the HPC-1 gene are responsible for at least a third of familial prostate cancer. Familial prostate cancer accounts for about 1 in 10 cases of the disease, while the numbers for the early onset form of the disease are somewhat higher.

"We know this gene seems to contribute to prostate cancer risk in a number of ethnic backgrounds," says Dr. Jeffrey Trent, scientific director of NCHGR's division of intramural research and head of the laboratory where the genotyping was conducted. "There's linkage in Swedish families as well as American families, including African-American families," adds Trent.

Development of a susceptibility test is still several steps away, requiring at a minimum the identification of the HPC-1 gene itself, according to NCHGR Director Dr. Francis Collins. "In the future," says Collins, "combining genetic susceptibility testing with testing for prostate-specific antigen and other early detection measures will be potentially of value in preventing deaths from this common disorder."

The study focused first on analyzing data and tissue samples from 66 high-risk American families collected by Johns Hopkins researchers. Most of the families were recruited through letters from urologists, and some were identified through media advertisements. At NCHGR, a genome-wide scan of DNA from these families indicated a gene on chromosome 1. The site was confirmed by analyzing DNA from an additional 13 high-risk American families and 12 high-risk families studied by scientists at Umea University.

The number of prostate cancer cases varies widely among different ethnic groups. African-American men suffer the highest incidence rate in the world, more than 180 cases annually per 100,000 population, and their death rate is also the highest, about 54 per 100,000. Both of the African-American families included in the study showed linkage to the site of HPC-1, suggesting that the gene may eventually help explain why African-American men are exceptionally vulnerable to the disease. In the U.S., incidence is quite high also (almost 135 cases per 100,000) among white men, lower (around 89 cases per 100,000) among Hispanic and Japanese men, and lowest of all in other groups whose ancestors came from Asia. It is estimated that 317,000 American men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer this year.

Hopkins researchers are asking individuals from families in which three or more close relatives have had prostate cancer and who wish to participate in a research study on the genetics of that disease to contact the study team at (410) 614-5434, or write to Dr. Patrick C. Walsh, Hereditary Prostate Cancer Study, Dept. W., Brady Urological Institute, Johns Hopkins University Hospital, Baltimore, MD 21287.

For more information about prostate cancer, call the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER.

### *Strep Vaccine, cont. from page 6*

gator at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, 100 women of child-bearing age received either the conjugate vaccine, the pure polysaccharide vaccine or a placebo injection. The conjugate vaccine stimulated the production of much higher levels of antibody than did the pure polysaccharide vaccine. In addition, linking the capsule to the tetanus toxoid protein did not affect the function of the resulting antibodies — in test tube experiments, antibodies produced by either vaccine neutralized Group B strep equally well.

Dr. Kasper, Dr. Baker and their colleagues then injected pregnant mice with antibodies isolated from women immunized with the conjugate vaccine. Upon exposure to Group B strep bacteria, nearly three-fourths of the offspring born to these mice were protected from infection. Offspring born to mice that had been injected during pregnancy with human serum lacking Group B strep antibodies died after exposure to the bacteria.

"These findings demonstrate that the antibodies produced by the conjugate vaccine are able to cross the placental membrane and could confer protection against Group B strep to the fetus," says Dr. Kasper.

The vaccine used in the current study was a monovalent product — designed to protect against just one of the various types of Group B strep that cause disease in infants. Ultimately, a multivalent vaccine, providing protection against all types, will be needed. Acknowledging that much more work remains before a Group B strep vaccine reaches the marketplace, Dr. Kasper says that the conjugate vaccine developed by his group provides a blueprint for subsequent vaccines.

"We're definitely headed in the right direction," he says. "This is a prototype of what Group B strep vaccines will look like."

*"Reason is also choice."*

*John Milton*



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR AIR BAGS ANNOUNCED

### From National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

■(WASHINGTON) The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) last week announced a comprehensive approach to preserve the important safety benefit of air bags while minimizing their danger to children and at-risk adults.

The agency announced its approach centers on accelerating the development of "smart air bag" technology for future vehicles with the intent of having the systems available in fall 1998 for 1999 models. More immediate measures include adoption of enhanced warning labels, depowering of air bags and continuing to allow the use of cutoff switches in vehicles without a rear seat to protect children.

NHTSA Administrator Ricardo Martinez, M.D., said, "The safety of the motoring public is our highest priority. Air bags are working well, but need to be improved to enhance the safety of children and small stature adults. These comprehensive measures will maintain the safety benefits of air bags, decrease their potential hazard to children and at-risk adults, and provide consumers with important safety information.

Administrator Martinez added that while these steps will enhance the safety of vehicle occupants in the interim, the effort can only be fully completed with the development and use of "smart" air bag technology.

The agency will propose setting a phase-in schedule for the next generation of air bags to begin in fall 1998 for 1999 models. With the growth of research and competition in air bag technology, NHTSA believes that "smart bags" will provide significantly greater safety in frontal crash protection, and wants to encourage both their rapid development and design flexibility. Smart bags will effectively "tailor" the deployment to the size of the occupant and the crash circumstances.

The other intermediate safety measures are:

- ✓ Improved warning labels. The agency announced the adoption of a final rule requiring new, highly visible warning labels for all new cars and light trucks beginning in 90 days and in effect until "smart" air bags are available. The labels will be affixed to both sides of the sun visors making them visible when the visors are either up or down. In addition, new vehicles will be required to have a prominent warning label affixed to the center of the dashboard as a strong,

clearly visible reminder at the time of delivery.

- ✓ A final rule also announced last week requires a new, highly visible air bag danger warning label on child safety seats.

- ✓ Depowering for safety. NHTSA will propose that air bags be depowered between 20-35 percent to reduce the deployment force for added safety. Once adopted, depowered air bags would be permitted until smart air bag technology is phased into new cars.

- ✓ Cutoff Switches for Vehicles with No Rear Seat. NHTSA will issue a final rule extending its existing policy of permitting manufacturers to install manual cutoff switches in vehicles without a back seat, or with a back seat that is too small to install a child safety seat.

- ✓ Option for Owners of Air Bag-Equipped Vehicles. The agency will propose allowing dealers to deactivate the air bags of any owner who requests it. Currently, NHTSA permits deactivation on a case-by-case basis. The new policy would permit families who need to have children in the front seat for medical monitoring purposes, car pools with front-seated children, short-stature individuals, and others who have reasonable concerns about a potential danger to turn the air bag off. Automobile dealers will be asked to help their customers make informed decisions by providing them with NHTSA guidance on the benefits and dangers of deactivating the air bag system, and would be required to install a label indicating that the air bag has been disabled.

- ✓ Increased public awareness. NHTSA will increase its own air bag public aware-

ness activities and coordinate them with information efforts underway by the national Air Bag Safety Campaign, the coalition that it organized last year involving car companies, insurers and safety groups. It also plans a national distribution of copies of a warning label, using state motor vehicle offices, fast food chains, convenience stores and other outlets, and is using its popular public service characters, "Vince and Larry," to help convey information about air bag dangers as part of their seat belt message.

- ✓ Expanded Research Program. NHTSA is also announcing an expanded research program to improve the testing of air bags and crash protection for children and women. Recently, NHTSA received the support of the international research community, including government and industry representatives, to place a priority on this needed research.

"Overall, air bags are working well and are responsible for an 11 percent reduction in driver fatalities in passenger cars, including a 30 percent reduction in fatalities in head-on crashes. They are credited with saving more than 1,500 lives since 1986 when they began appearing in the U.S. fleet," Dr. Martinez said.

Regarding our proposal to allow air bags to be disconnected, we expect that very few will need to take this extreme action, and those who do will be made aware of the risks involved, Dr. Martinez said. You can greatly reduce the risk of air bag injury by being buckled and back from the air bag.

Consumers who have questions or concerns about air bags should contact the agency's toll-free Auto Safety Hotline at (800) 424-9393.





## Prefiled Bills

**SB 1** Principal Author(s): Fisher, Ted V. Requires the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics to solicit proposals and award grants for pilot projects that develop and establish model programs implementing advanced science and math curriculum at local vocational-technical school sites or at local school sites via distance learning.; Emergency. Prefiled

**SB 2** Principal Author(s): Fisher, Ted V. Modifies membership and powers and duties of Physical Therapy Committee. Provides for licensure of foreign-trained applicants. Requires State Board of Medical Licensure and Supervision to establish by rule requirements for continuing education.; Effective Date: 11/01/97. Prefiled

**SB 3** Principal Author(s): Ford, Charles R.; Vaughn, Ray Prohibits policies, rules and ordinances that place a greater burden on a municipal or county officer or employee than the burden that is placed on any other person who acts to defend the person's family, home, or property.; Emergency. Prefiled

## Statutory Citation Cross Reference

Title	Section	Motion	Bill
51	24.5	NEW LAW	SB 3
59	887.12	AMEND	SB 2

Title	Section	Motion	Bill
59	887.4	AMEND	SB 2
59	887.6	AMEND	SB 2

Title	Section	Motion	Bill
70	1210.404	NEW LAW	SB 1

## Bill Subject Cross Reference

**CITIES & TOWNS**  
SB 3

**COUNTIES**  
SB 3

**EDUCATION**  
SB 1

**PROFESSIONS & OCCUPATIONS**  
SB 2



# Calendar of Meetings & Events

## Tuesday, November 26, 1996

- 9:30 Environmental Quality Board**  
SW Technology Center, Altus
- 
- 10:00 Commission on Children & Youth**  
4545 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 114, Oklahoma City
- 
- House Interim Study 96H-25, Ft. Sill State/National Cemetery Site**  
State Capitol, House Chamber

## Monday, December 2, 1996

- 10:00 State Board of Equalization**  
State Capitol, Governor's Conference Room
- 
- 11:00 Oklahoma Transportation Commission**  
200 NE 21 St., Commission Room, 1st Floor, Oklahoma City
- 
- 1:00 Senate Wildlife Committee**  
Groendyke Lodge, Lake Helllums Road, NW of Enid

## Tuesday, December 3, 1996

- 9:00 Joint State Government Internal Affairs Investigation Review Committee**  
State Capitol, Room 512-A
- 
- 9:30 Oklahoma Commission for Human Services**  
Room 214, Sequoyah Office Bldg., Oklahoma City
- 
- 10:00 Joint State-Tribal Relations Committee**  
State Capitol, Room 419-C
- 
- 1:30 Senate Interim Study 96S-111, Capital Funding Needs**  
Second Floor Boardroom of Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City

## Thursday, December 5, 1996

- 10:00 Senate Interim Study 96S-102, Tourism & Recreation Infrastructure Funding Needs**  
State Capitol, Room 419-C



# Calendar of Meetings & Events

## Tuesday, December 10, 1996

**9:00**                      **Commissioners of the Land**  
State Capitol, Governor's Large Conference Room

## Thursday, December 12, 1996

**1:00**                      **Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Prep**  
Dyer Room, Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City

## Friday, December 13, 1996

**10:00**                      **War Veterans Commission**  
Conference Room, Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, Oklahoma City

**1:00**                      **Board of Corrections**  
Lexington Correctional Center, Lexington, OK

## Tuesday, December 17, 1996

**10:00**                      **Commission on Children & Youth**  
4545 N. Lincoln, Suite 114, Oklahoma City

## Thursday, December 19, 1996

**9:00**                      **Horse Racing Commission**  
Shepherd Mall Activity Center, 2426 Plaza Prom, Oklahoma City

**10:00**                      **Senate Energy Administration Reform Task Force**  
Per SB 911  
University Center at Tulsa/Rogers State College, BS Robert Room, North Hall, Tulsa

## Friday, December 20, 1996

**10:00**                      **Ethics Commission**  
Public Hearing followed by regular meeting  
Auditorium of the Wiley Post Historical Building, 2100 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City

**Fire Marshal Commission**  
4545 Lincoln Blvd., Suite 280, Oklahoma City

## Monday, December 30, 1996

**10:00**                      **Board of Equalization**  
State Capitol, Governor's Conference Room, Oklahoma City

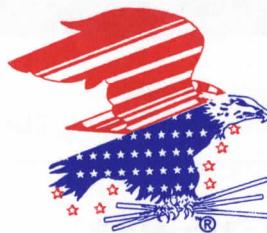




"Of course they always tell you to make changes — because you always tell them how easy it is to make changes."

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