

## GOVERNOR OPPOSES SALT REMOVAL PROJECT

From Oklahoma Wildlife Dept.

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) In a recent letter to the Council on Environmental Quality in Washington, D.C., Governor Frank Keating voiced his opposition to a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' plan to remove the naturally-occurring salt from the Red River above Lake Texoma.

Called the Red River Chloride Control Project, the plan would remove the salt from the Red River system to provide drinking water for north Texas and water for irrigation, also mostly in Texas.

According to fish and wildlife biologists and local tourism officials, the project could not only damage Lake Texoma's \$21 million-a-year striped bass and other recreational angling fisheries, but it also could threaten the natural features of the Red River ecosystem.

"After discussion with many groups, individuals, and state and federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, I continue to be concerned with the possible environmental and economic impacts to the State of Oklahoma," Keating said. "Further, I am worried this huge investment of tax dollars far outweighs the perceived benefits to either Oklahoma, Texas or the nation. These factors, coupled with the fact that there is little, if any, Oklahoma support, lead me to oppose this project."

Public meetings held in both Oklahoma and Texas this fall also revealed very little support for the Red River Chloride Control Project. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and numerous sportsmen's groups

in both states have lined up in opposition to the project.

"Governor Keating's opposition to this project is a significant step toward halting the project," said Barry Bolton, assistant chief of fisheries in charge of management for the Wildlife Department. "If similar opposition comes from Governor Bush in Texas, I think it would almost assuredly signal the end of the Red River Chloride Control Project."

The Corps' plan calls for using brine lakes, low-water dams and a variety of other methods to prevent salt from entering the Red River system.

By lowering the river's salt content, its waters could be more easily used for a variety of agricultural, municipal and industrial uses. Those in opposition, however, say the project's \$260 to \$300 million price tag is far too high, given the possible environmental impacts. Additionally, newer, and more efficient technologies now exist which opponents say make the project obsolete.

"Thousands of acres of wildlife habitat also could be destroyed to create brine lakes, not to mention the potential degradation of the Red River and Lake Texoma," Bolton said.

**Language Proposal, cont. from page 1**  
tionally, existing laws which require county commissioners to publish a complete report of all its official proceedings at regular and special meetings allows that publication to occur "in any [language] other than the English language whenever it shall deem it necessary for the better information of the inhabitants."

Proponents of the use of English as an official language in government documents scored one victory during the 45th Legislature with the passage of HB2796. By Rep. Jari Askins, D-Duncan, and Sen. Jerry Smith, R-Tulsa, the measure, which was signed by the governor, sets standards for the filing of certain papers with country clerks, including that the specific documents be filed in English.

That victory, however, has been short lived. The Nov. 1 implementation of the bill was delayed when an Oklahoma County judge issued a restraining order after a number of business associations raised questions about some of the bill's provisions. A hearing on the matter is set for December.

*"Curiosity is a lust of the mind."*

*Thomas Hobbes*

## KEATING'S POINT OF COMPARISON BEHIND NATION

By Shawn Ashley  
Staff Writer

■(GIT) It's a comparison Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating likes to make — Oklahoma versus Texas.

The contest, he says, is in the pockets of the two adjacent states' residents — Texans have more and Oklahomans have less.

According to a recently published report, Keating is correct, but the differences between the two states are not as great as they sometimes sound.

Texas' per capita income is approximately 90 percent of the national average, according to the chairman of the University of North Texas' economic development center, Bernard Weinstein. Oklahoma's, meanwhile, comes in at roughly 80 percent of the national average, according to the Oklahoma Economic Forecast Midyear Review released in September, a full 10 points lower than Texas'.

Those figures, however, put both states, according to Weinstein and Oklahoma State University, which prepared the report on Oklahoma's economy, about where they were in the 1950s.

The similarities don't end with per capita income. Most of Texas' higher paying jobs, like in Oklahoma, can be found in its larger metropolitan areas, such as Dallas and Houston, while the per capita income in the state's rural areas is consistently lower, sometimes dramatically. And while Texas has seen better than one-half million jobs created in the past two years, the bulk of those jobs, like in Oklahoma, have fallen at the lower end of the pay scale, studies indicate.

Findings such as those have led Texas Governor George Bush, a man Keating describes as a friend, to address some of the same public policy issues and solutions as Oklahoma. Bush announced earlier this month, for example, a plan to cut state property taxes by \$1 billion statewide. The plan has drawn criticism from some Democratic lawmakers there who say that the Republican governor has yet to fully outline his plan and that future state revenues may not justify such a dramatic cut.

Property tax reform as an economic improvement and development tool was on the minds of Oklahomans for years, culminating with their passage of three state questions earlier this month that place greater controls and limits on property taxes, particularly their increases.

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