

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED

It was a tearful Weedn who explained that Tuesday's swearing-in ceremony was the first missed by her mother and father. Her father, she explained, passed away on the first day of the last legislative session and her mother was too ill to make the trip.

"This campaign," she said, "was for my dad."

Sen. Gene Stipe, D-McAlester, who has been serving in the legislature since 1948, told those gathered for the ceremony that he had attempted to convince members of his family to attend but without success.

"My granddaughter is having a ballet recital today," he said, "so I was kind of pre-empted."

Sen. Bill Mickle, D-Durant and majority floor leader, will not face reelection until 1998, but he joined his fellow lawmakers on the floor, taking advantage of the time to announce his reelection bid and to comment on Stipe's tenure.

"I was three-years-old," Mickle said, "when Sen. Stipe entered the Senate. I grew up in his district, but I had to move out of it to get elected."

The scene was much the same in the House, where Speaker-elect Loyd Benson, D-Frederick, presided over his first gathering of all 101 representatives.

Rep. Sean Voskuhl, D-Marshall, joked about the narrow margin by which he won reelection, 18-votes, saying he was "back by popular demand."

Rep. Mike Mass, D-Hartshorne, said his wife and daughter had come to the capitol, "because they heard they could get a free airplane ride," referring to the controversy surrounding the recently-purchased governor's airplane.

Ironically, Benson then called on Rep. Russ Roach, D-Tulsa and the most outspoken critic of the airplane purchase. The laughter in the House soon died as Roach described a recent conversation with his wife in which she, citing personal attacks during the recent election, said she hoped their son never sought public office.

"That's something we should think about," Roach said, wiping away tears. "That's something we can change."

Only moments earlier, Roach's son appeared to become the youngest person ever to take the oath of office, standing beside his father with his hand raised, reciting the oath along with his father.

The impact of the general election was also evident in places other than the House and Senate floor. A notecard placed on the House pressboard, for example advertised a cottage for rent, where "Rep. Stottlemire stayed (here) for three terms."

Stottlemire, D-Tulsa, lost his District 77 reelection bid to Mark Liotta, R-Tulsa.

—SHAWN ASHLEY
11/19/96

BILL TO PROTECT PUBLIC WORKERS FILED

■(GIT) Two state lawmakers filed a measure on Monday which would forbid municipalities and counties from adopting rules or policies for employees who act to defend their family or home that are more harsh than those applied to other citizens.

SB3, by Sen. Charley Ford, R-Tulsa and Rep. Ray Vaughn, R-Edmond, follows publicity during the summer about the case of John Jerkins, a Stillwater police officer who was demoted and disciplined after refusing to admit that he was wrong when he slapped a 17-year-old boy he found in his home and who had just had sex with his daughter.

Ford said neither a city nor a county has a right to tell its employees how to parent their children in their own homes.

The bill is third to be filed in anticipation of the 46th legislative session and the first to carry both a House and Senate author.

—SHAWN ASHLEY
11/19/96

LIBERTARIAN PARTY SUES STATE ELECTION BOARD

■(GIT) The state chapter of the Libertarian Party asked a federal judge on Monday to prevent the state election board from enforcing a law that would put an end to the party's official recognition, effectively removing them from future ballots.

The party's presidential candidate, Harry Browne, garnered only 5,005 votes in the general election, a little less than one-half of one percent and well below the 10 percent of the votes cast in a general election needed to remain a recognized political party.

"The law requires that political parties receive at least 10 percent of the vote in a general election," said Lance Ward, state election board secretary, "and that if they do not, they will cease to exist as a recognized

party. That is exactly what happened here."

The statute, the lawsuit alleges, favors the established and more entrenched political parties — Republicans, Democrats and Reformers — over smaller, fledgling organizations.

"I would say the fact that we've had three federal suits filed against us this year is a bit odd," Ward said. "It's not unusual to have a candidate, particularly a defeated candidate, bring an action in district court and to see that move to the Oklahoma Supreme Court during a major election season, but that didn't happen this time."

When the Reform and Libertarian parties' suits are decided, Ward added, essentially every aspect of Oklahoma's election laws will have been touched in one way or another.

"The Natural Law Party took issue with the requirements to get on the ballot," Ward explained. "Then, the Reform Party is challenging the process involved in registering people. This lawsuit addresses the requirements to remain on the ballot. After this, I'm not sure what is left."

—SHAWN ASHLEY
11/19/96

HOUSE DEADLINES SET; SENATE WAITING

■(GIT) The official start of the 46th Legislature is still 2 1/2 months away, but that does not mean the lawmaking process is not already underway.

Members of both the state House and Senate face certain deadlines in order for their ideas about the state's public policy to become law.

In the House, which will hold an organizational meeting Jan. 7, representatives must meet the following deadlines;

✓ Dec. 13, deadline for requesting bill drafting;

✓ Jan. 10, deadline for introduction of bills; and

✓ Jan. 20 to 31, committee work on bills.

In the Senate, the deadlines are less certain, pending a decision by Sen. Bill Mickle, D-Durant and majority floor leader, who is responsible for setting that legislative house's deadlines. It is expected, however, that the Senate will follow its traditional deadlines, requiring bill drafting requests to be submitted by the middle of January and setting an end of January deadline for bills' filings.

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