

Texas Senate passes budget

AUSTIN - The Senate approved its version of the state budget Wednesday, planning to spend \$182.2 billion for 2010-2011. This represents a 7 percent growth over last biennial budget, due to nearly \$11 billion in federal stimulus money. Actual spending of state funds only increases about 2 percent each year of the next biennium. Lt. Governor David Dewhurst said this reflects the Senate's commitment to fiscal responsibility in troubled economic times. "When families all around the state of Texas are tightening the belt," he said, "they know that, at least in the Legislature, our members are trying to do everything we can for people that are suffering."

services appropriations in all funds are more than \$60 billion, with two-thirds of that dedicated toward Medicaid funding. Workgroup leader Senator Bob Deuell of Greenville pointed out important funding changes, including \$293 million for an attendant care pay raise and \$3.1 billion to reduce waiting lists by at least 10 percent for state services, expanding services to 10,000 Texans.

The budget for public education would stay about the same as last biennium, more than \$52 billion, but higher education spending would increase \$1.5 billion to a total of \$22.6 billion. The increased funding will give more money to state and community colleges as well as a \$134 million increase in student financial aid.

Federal money from the stimulus plan will flow mostly

into workforce development and training and infrastructure. The Senate budget appropriates \$2.25 billion in federal funds toward technology grants and \$1.6 billion for new transportation construction. It would also spend nearly \$500 million in stimulus funds for workforce training.

Once the House passes its appropriations bill, five Senators appointed by the Lt. Governor and five Representatives appointed by the House Speaker will meet to hammer out difference between the two spending proposals. The final budget will come before both houses for a vote in middle or late May.



WILLACY COUNTY ART LEAGUE MEMBERS created handmade valentines at their February meeting to distribute to the residents of Retama Manor in Raymondville.

Ruth Ann Taylor gave a program on creating cards and the members used an assortment of materials furnished by Ruth Ann to make the cards.

Shown, from left to right, Vivian Martin, Myrilla Sparhawk, Sonya Tijerina, Cissie Watson, Bessie Hartman, Barbara Vreeland, Lupita Vasquez, Ann Moncus, and Coralie Somers. Not shown, Ruth Ann Taylor.

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