

Bill: Workers would pay for use of state cars

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) A bill that has already passed unanimously through a Texas House committee would require government employees who drive state-owned cars to reimburse taxpayers for their personal use.

The bill, which would exempt law-enforcement officials who respond to emergency calls, would make employees pay back the state when they use the car for personal errands or on their commutes.

"Most Texans have to pay for their own personal trips and errands, to get back and forth to work," said state Rep. Terri Hodge, D-Dallas, who filed the bill. "State employees should, too. The taxpayers should not be footing that bill."

Hodge's bill would require employees with take-home state cars to keep detailed mileage logs and to reimburse the state for any "personal use mileage accumulated on the vehicle."

About 1,300 state employees at 95 state agencies commute to work in state-owned cars, according to figures provided to the Austin American-Statesmen by the comptroller's office.

Hodge said she believes those figures are low and that there are more state cars on the road than previously thought. The Texas Department of Transportation, for example, reported 452 vehicles to the comptroller but 901 vehicles to Hodge's office. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice, which reported 10 vehicles to the comptroller, told Hodge it had 65.

TxDOT authorization forms, which are similar to those used by other agencies, say that most take-

home vehicles are necessary in order "to provide a minimum response time in emergency situations."

Some top officials and supervisors have take-home cars as a perk of the job. Other state workers take home specialized vehicles in case they are dispatched on emergency calls.

"Work vehicles are to be used only for work purposes," TxDOT spokesman Chris Lippincott said. "Those vehicles belong to the taxpayers."

Hodge said emergency responders should have take-home cars, but that many other employees are using them simply to commute to the office. She also noted that when the comptroller's office installed global positioning satellite devices in its cars several years ago, the mileage dropped.

"We did a study and found that many of the cars that are being taken home by state employees are just being driven to and from work, by people who are never called out for an emergency _ ever," Hodge said.



THE BASEBALL that was used for the first pitch Saturday is the original ball that then 12-year-old Jeff Hommel hit a grand slam with on June 19, 1978. Hommel's team American Legion won the game against Swayze-Hutchins 8-2. This June marks the ball's 31st anniversary. Jeff's father, Robert Hommel, bought the prized ball for \$5.00 from a child that recovered it after the home run. Shown, from left to right, is Jeff Hommel, and City Commissioner Clifton Smith.



WILLACY COUNTY PUBLIC NOTICE

U.S. Department of Justice-Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program

Willacy County is giving notice of Willacy County's intent to submit a U.S. Department of Justice-Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program application request of \$10,249 for law enforcement training for the Willacy County Sheriff's Department. The application is available for review at the County Judge's Office located at 576 West Main Street, Raymondville, Texas 78580 during regular business hours. Those parties wishing to express their views concerning the proposed application may provide written or oral comments within thirty (30) days of this notice to:

Willacy County Judge
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