

Wild Basin: Goal in sight?

This month, fund raisers with a dream expect the financial support of the local business community will turn a beautiful portion of Texas Hill Country into the Wild Basin Wilderness Park.

With the recent Austin Chamber of Commerce endorsement in hand, grateful Wild Basin backers are optimistic that their two-year dream to preserve 300 unspoiled acres just west of downtown Austin will soon become reality.

Only \$54,000 of the needed \$175,000 remains to be raised. This money, applied to federal matching funds, will allow the purchase of this exceptional area.

At the Chamber meeting, Tracor President Frank McBee Jr. urged business leaders to support the park because it would enhance the quality of life in Austin, making it more attractive to industry and to highly qualified, sought-after job applicants. He later said all Chamber members will receive letters asking them to support Wild Basin as a worthy project.

Members of the Wild Basin committee assigned to contact businesses feel the Chamber's endorsement was a great boost to their efforts.

Although several local businesses already have made sizeable tax-deductible contributions, "little people" donations, from \$10 to \$50, have been the backbone of the fund drive.

Now, with the Chamber of Commerce backing, the goal to preserve this unique wilderness area is within sight. When that goal is attained, local citizens and business leaders can take pride in the knowledge that their donations will be a source of enjoyment for themselves and future generations.

Stubs out

A bill to stop the signing of ballot stubs by Texas voters, having made it through the House, is now out of a Senate committee. That's good.

The measure, by Rep. Ernestine Glossbrenner of Alice, should be made law. The signing of ballot stubs was intended as a check on illegal voting. But it has served to intimidate people into voting the "right" way or not voting at all for fear of retaliation.

The ballot should be secret, as it is for those who cast their ballots in voting machines.

An argument against elimination of the signed stub is that it would make it hard for officials to find fraudulent votes. But voting officials should catch that sort of thing short of the voting booth.

Glossbrenner's legislation comes at a time when President Carter is proposing ways to open up the voting process. It is an idea whose time has come.

House of trivia

The Texas House Wednesday continued its descent into inanity by voting 110-28 to ban recognition of homosexual organizations on state university campuses.

There were voices of reason in the crush to get on the record against deviate behavior. Houston Rep. Henry Allee said, "You know you are being put upon. Let's stop playing games. . . are you a serious legislative body or not?"

Unfortunately, Allee was answered by the knee-jerk 110-28 vote.

Three members of the Travis County delegation voted against the silliness — Reps. Gonzalo Barrientos, Wilhelmina Delco and Sarah Weddington. Gerald Hill went along with the mad rush to interfere with the proper functions of university administrations.

There is precious little time left in the session to deal with pressing matters. If the House doesn't quit dabbling in side issues and playing the clown, the term "laughing stock" will become synonymous with Texas Legislature.