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Section B



John Kelso

Bush takes a whuppin' in West Texas

President Bush beat the rest of the field like an orchestra timpani in my poll to find out who's least admired among a list of shaky characters.

A couple weeks ago, I asked y'all to vote on who you thought should have the lowest approval rating: George W., Saddam Hussein, Kenneth Lay, O.J. Simpson, Barry Bonds, Jeffrey "Let's Do Lunch" Dahmer and Sarah, the nasty old former bartender out at the Dry Creek Cafe on Mount Bonnell Road.

One guy e-mailed me all honked off for including Osama bin Laden in the same poll with George W. I never mentioned bin Laden in my poll, and I told the guy so. Seems he had gotten bin Laden and Saddam mixed up.

Isn't that how we got into this Iraq mess in the first place?

Bush was a shoo-in for lowest approval rating with 534 votes, or 62.17 percent of the vote. Sarah came in a distant second with 89 votes, or 10.36 percent. What this proves is that there are more people chapped about the war in Iraq than there are folks who have been thrown out of the Dry Creek Cafe.

The rest of the field came in like this: Hussein, 83 votes (9.66 percent); Dahmer, 47 votes (5.47 percent); Simpson, 45 votes (5.24 percent); Bonds, 32 votes (3.73 percent) and Lay, 29 votes (3.38 percent).

An 'extroverted' courthouse

Judges and architects thrilled with design that signals 'new generation of civic buildings'

By Jeanne Claire van Ryzin
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

"Open." "Extroverted." "Dignified."

That's how federal judges and architects characterized designs unveiled Monday for the \$63 million federal courthouse planned for a prominent downtown block.

And with plans for a

pedestrian mall on a one-block stretch of San Antonio Street, along the building's east side, the building will transform Republic Square Park into "its front lawn and public living room," U.S. Magistrate Andrew Austin said. "We wanted it to be a reminder that the courts are an open place for the public. We think this signals a new generation of civic buildings for

Austin."

The seven-story, 211,690-square-foot building will be located on the block west of Republic Square Park. Currently, the hulking skeleton of the Intel Corp. building, abandoned in 2001 when the chip-maker canceled its plans for a downtown office, occupies the site.

The U.S. General Services Administration acquired the Intel site in 2004. Construction on the courthouse, which will house eight courtrooms as well as facilities for the U.S. Marshals

Service, U.S. Attorney, the GSA and federal probation and pretrial services, is slated to begin in 2008, pending approval by the U.S. Congress in the next budget cycle.

Lead architect Mack Scogin, representing Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects of Atlanta, credited Judge Austin and his colleagues for asking that the building be "unusually extroverted."

"This building has to

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AMERICAN-STATESMAN



Wreck injures woman

Emergency personnel tended to a woman after the car in which she was riding landed in a ditch during a wreck near East 12th Street and Airport Boulevard on Monday. Her injuries were not life-threatening, Austin police said.

Deborah Cannon
AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Ex-Christian Coalition leader won't face lobby charges

By Jim Galloway

ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

A Travis County prosecutor announced Monday that he wouldn't pursue a misdemeanor criminal investigation into whether former Christian Coalition Director Ralph Reed had violated Texas' lobbying laws.

Travis County Attorney David Escamilla said that Reed's activities raised "legitimate questions" but that a two-year statute of limitations prevented him from pursuing the case.

"There's smoke," Escamilla said. "But all of the smoke relates to a time period I can't do anything about."

A spokesman for Reed, now running for lieutenant governor of Georgia, declared the Republican exonerated.

"This politically motivated complaint by far-left groups had no basis in fact, and we are pleased it is concluded," campaign manager Jared Thomas said.

Texans for Public Justice, a government watchdog group,

asked Escamilla three months ago to examine Reed's anti-gambling activities in Texas in 2001 and 2002 on behalf of a casino-owning Coushatta tribe in Louisiana, a client of now-disgraced Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

The group alleged that Reed, who did not register as a lobbyist, improperly contacted Texas officials as part of the campaign.

The investigation by Escamilla, a Democrat, was expanded to include Reed's 2002 lobbying work in Texas for Channel One,

which provides public schools with educational TV programs.

In making his decision, Escamilla said that evidence he examined primarily included documents made public by the U.S. Senate Indian Affairs Committee, which over the past 18 months has examined Abramoff's relationships with his six Indian tribe clients, who hired him to protect or advance their gambling interests.

Abramoff pleaded guilty in January to bilking his tribal clients of millions and of bribery

of a public official.

Through Abramoff, Reed was paid \$4 million by the Louisiana Coushattas to conduct anti-gambling campaigns in Louisiana and Texas to protect the tribe's market share. Reed has said he didn't know the Coushattas were behind his efforts and now regrets his association with Abramoff. But e-mails at the time show Abramoff openly discussing the tribal source of funding with Reed.

According to Texas' lobbying law, contact by a paid agent with

a legislator or state administrator or any staffer can require registration as a lobbyist and disclosure of the client whose interests are being served.

Documents suggest that Reed was supposed to push then-Attorney General John Cornyn to close a casino operated by the Tigua tribe in El Paso and file a similar lawsuit against the Alabama Coushatta tribe in Texas, and to kill bills in the Legislature that would have allowed both tribes to operate their gambling establishments.

DESIGN: Street will become 'living room'

Continued from B1

represent the entire U.S., not just Austin," Scogin said. "It's at once of this place and also of a much larger, complex place."

Security requirements adopted by the federal government since the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City dictate that the building maintain a 50-foot setback from any street. By closing the San Antonio side of the block, the building can sit closer to the east edge of the property line, Scogin said.

Though exact materials have not been selected, the design dictates that the geometric building be clad in either pale precast concrete or limestone panels punctuated with long vertical ribbon-like expanses of glass.

Translucent glass will sheath two-story exterior courtroom walls on all sides. Deep recesses on the northeast corner will shade two-story lobby windows. Each of the four facades will bear a distinct profile, offering what Scogin called "a 360-degree relationship to the city."

The courthouse was designed under the auspices of the GSA's Design Excellence Program. The agency that oversees government building

projects began the design initiative in 1994 to seek out top U.S. architects to create federal buildings "that ultimately become respected landmarks" according to its published mandate. Fifty-one courthouses have been completed under the program, with several dozen more under design and construction.

Since forming in the mid-1980s, Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects has designed a variety of university and government buildings as well as private homes. Among their award-winning projects are a downtown satellite gallery of the High Museum in Atlanta, a building for Ohio State University's architecture school and several residences in Georgia.

Also announced at Monday's event was the GSA's agreement to accept possession of a 1955 abstract mural by Seymour Fogel painted on a wall of the former American National Bank building on Seventh and Colorado streets, now owned by the Texas General Land Office.

Attorney Robert Summers, spearheading preservation of the mural, said the monumental artwork will be moved to the new federal courthouse for permanent public display.

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MACK SCOGIN MERRILL ELAM ARCHITECTS
The courthouse's facades will create a '360-degree relationship to the city,' lead architect Mack Scogin said. 'This building has to represent the entire U.S., not just Austin.'

CASE: Judge weighing ads by law enforcement group

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enforcement group — is crawling through state and federal courts.

In one form or another, the central question is whether the Texas election law that bars corporate spending in connection with a campaign applies to what happened in the 2002 election.

In that instance, DeLay's political committee, the state's largest business organization and the Virginia law enforcement group, working together, used the same model: spend corporate money on election issues to help Republican candidates without reporting the donors to Texas election officials.

Through investigations and court battles, it is now known that DeLay's Texans for a Republican Majority solicited money from Washington's corporate lobbyists seeking favorable treatment from Congress.

The Texas Association of Business turned to the insurance industry, under fire from the public at the time over skyrocketing rates, to secretly underwrite its \$1.7 million in direct mail to voters.

The Law Enforcement Alliance's donors remain a mystery.

On Monday, Yeakel had two issues before him in the pre-trial arguments.

Whether to dismiss the lawsuit brought against the law enforcement group by

Virginia group with its Texas ads.

Yeakel had dropped Colyandro from an earlier version of the lawsuit because of a shortage of evidence. In a subsequent filing, the Democrats claimed that Colyandro contacted the Virginia group about doing work in Texas. Colyandro has said he handed that job to another consultant.

Yeakel's decision is pending.

Tom Kirby, a Washington lawyer representing the Law Enforcement Alliance of America, complained that the organization's free speech and right to comment on this year's elections are being "severely chilled" by the lawsuit.

He argued that the group's mailers and commercial were legal because they avoided using the so-called magic words such as "vote for" or "vote against."

"If what LEAA did is lawful, then there is no theory to conspire to do a lawful act," Kirby said, arguing for dismissal.

He also said there is no evidence of Colyandro and the group conspiring to do anything illegal. He said that adding Colyandro, a Texan, to the lawsuit is just a ploy for transferring the case out of federal court into state courts.

Austin lawyer Doug Ray, representing the two Democrats, disputed that "magic words" is the legal standard for determining whether an ad expressly advocates the elec-

GLOBAL: Infected birds might arrive this year

Continued from B1

unthinkable, because it happens," said U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, who was among those speaking at the summit sponsored by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

you say before the pandemic occurs seems alarmist," Leavitt said. "Anything you've done before it starts seems inadequate."

State Health Commissioner Eduardo Sanchez said his message is, "Don't panic, but stay informed."

Getting ready

State Health Commissioner Eduardo Sanchez offered these steps to prepare for a possible flu pandemic:

- Keep a 30-day supply of food and 90 days of medications on hand.
- Maintain a home-emergency kit that has clothes, medical