



# Fire-protection district hopes dead

► A bill that would have allowed the city to set up such a district is rejected 51-41 in the House.

By P.J. LASSEK  
World Staff Writer

Any hope that Tulsans will get an opportunity to vote on forming a fire protection district is dead until at least 2009.

Senate Bill 605 was rejected 51-41 this week in the House, with no reconsideration provisions attached.

That prohibits the issue from being addressed again until after the current Legislature adjourns, said Susan Hill, state assistant chief clerk for the House.

Mayor Kathy Taylor and other lead-



Taylor

ers from the region had lobbied for the right to ask residents to approve the formation of a fire protection district, something rural communities are allowed to do.

Such a district would have allowed communities to assess property taxes to fund fire service.

"Clearly we're disappointed," said Susan Hill, who oversees legislative issues for the Mayor's Office. "The issue was about equity and fairness, and rural areas already have this opportunity."

Neal said the city is grateful to the House leadership and sponsors of the

bill, noting that passage in the House fell only 10 votes short.

The bill earlier had cleared the Senate easily.

"What we were most hopeful for was the opportunity to diversify our revenue source," Neal said.

The city's general fund, which pays salaries and provides infrastructure and services, relies solely on volatile sales-tax revenue.

Forming a fire protection district would have, at a minimum, stabilized the funding for fire protection.

Taylor told the City Council on Thursday that it is "very unfortunate we will not be able to look at that revenue option for another two years."

Neal said a fire district would have freed up money from the general fund.

"We need stable sources of fund-

ing," she said. "Sales tax continues to be a roller coaster."

Neal said the city still must deliver quality basic services.

Taylor told the council that the bill was defeated in a bipartisan vote "with both Republicans and Democrats, including Speaker (Lance) Cargill, voting for it, and Democrats, including some from our own district, voting against it."

Taylor told the council that the bill's defeat will make the city's next two budget years even more difficult.

Neal said the "disappointment really comes from the fact that so much misinformation came at the very end. We were relatively confident things might have been able to move forward."

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# Shooting by officer is justified

► So rules the District Attorney's Office, which says the officer believed that a fleeing man was reaching for a weapon.

By BILL BRAUN  
World Staff Writer

The Tulsa County District Attorney's Office has determined that a Tulsa police officer was justified in fatally shooting a man who was fleeing police April 11.

Officer Dale White "had to make a split-second decision," and "once you look at all the facts and circumstances, it seems reasonably clear to me that his use of deadly force was justified," First Assistant District Attorney Doug Drummond said Friday. "You don't have to wait until you actually see a weapon to make that decision."

Reports show that White believed that Mario Fernando Torres Gomez was armed, and at the time "there was not a doubt in his mind" that Torres Gomez was a robbery suspect, Drummond said.

Reports show that while running, Torres Gomez "wouldn't take his hand from his waistband," and he did not comply with police commands to halt, Drummond said.

The shooting of Torres Gomez, 34 — an illegal immigrant with a history of arrests — ended a foot chase that occurred April 11 while police were investigating two armed robberies.

Torres Gomez was shot once in the head, Drummond said.

White, a 31-year veteran of the Tulsa Police Department, told investigators that the fleeing man had reached into his waistband as if to grab for a gun. No gun was found on Torres Gomez, but a gun was found in the apartment that he had fled, police said.

Torres Gomez had jumped out a window of the apartment, where a tracking dog had led police after the second of two robberies that day, police reported.

With officers in pursuit, he ran across U.S. 169 and then toward the U.S. 169-Interstate 44 interchange.

Drummond said White was concerned about the safety of another officer in close proximity who could not have seen Torres Gomez, based on that officer's vantage point.

Based on how close the fleeing man was to the highway, White also "was concerned he might hijack someone or injure someone in trying to escape," Drummond said.

Police previously confirmed that Torres Gomez was not involved in the robberies, but Drummond said Friday that investigators "haven't ruled him out."

Also, officials previously confirmed that Torres Gomez was in this country illegally in 2006, when he was returned to Mexico by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

Patrick Achilefu, 20, is charged alone with the two April 11 armed robberies that preceded the shooting. He is in the Tulsa Jail.

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## HE'S ALL HEART: BOY HAS PLAN TO HELP OTHERS

# Medical scare prompts mission

► A young athlete wants automatic external defibrillators available at the ballpark.

By KIM ARCHER  
World Staff Writer

BROKEN ARROW — Michael Slatcher's heart might have stopped on a baseball field last Thursday, but when it was restarted, it came roaring back to life.

The 11-year-old has dedicated the rest of his baseball season to raising money to equip Indian Springs Sports Complex with automatic external defibrillators at every concession stand.

"I actually do feel that I'm alive for a reason," Michael said. "God knew I would raise money for defibrillators."

Michael was playing catcher for his team, the Hurricanes, on April 19 when he was hit in the chest with a baseball bat accidentally.

Michael managed to scoop up the ball and throw it to first base before collapsing into cardiac arrest on the field.

His cardiologist, Dr. Matthew Kimberling of St. Francis Hospital, said Slatcher experienced commotio cordis, a rare occurrence that happens when a person is hit in the chest at precisely the right place and exactly the right time to throw the heart into a lethal arrhythmia.

Michael's experience is made even more rare because he lived, which Kimberling credits to an off-duty paramedic and doctor who administered immediate cardiopulmonary resuscitation on the field.

In fact, a 6-year-old Red Oak boy died Sunday after being hit in the chest with a baseball. His death was attributed to commotio cordis.

"I feel blessed," said Michael, whose fervor to save other children's lives already has inspired a national nonprofit group called Parent Heart Watch to donate the

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Photos by STEPHEN HOLMAN/Tulsa World

Michael Slatcher, 11 (top left), jokes around with teammates Friday night before the Hurricanes' game at the Indian Springs Sports Complex in Broken Arrow. On April 19, Michael's heart stopped when he was hit in the chest with a baseball bat accidentally. Now it is his mission to raise money to place automatic external defibrillators in every concession stand at the park.



Lenora Slatcher hugs her son Michael, 11, before his baseball team's game Friday night. Michael, who is still recovering from a freak cardiac episode, didn't get to play, but he used his time to raise money for automatic external defibrillators.

# Federal prosecutor, wife charged in child abuse

By SUSAN HYLTON  
World Staff Writer

MUSKOGEE — An assistant U.S. attorney has been charged with three counts of child abuse, and his wife has been charged with one count of domestic abuse.

David "Mike" Littlefield, 57, is accused of injuring his 17-year-old daughter in November by "beating her head against a metal bed frame while putting his knee in her side and smashing her head against the floor," records show.

Littlefield has been with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Oklahoma since 1990.

"We call it as we see it. Everyone is treated equal," Muskogee County Assistant District Attorney Nikki Baker Dotson said, noting that the evi-



M. Littlefield



D. Littlefield

dence shows that a crime was committed.

Photographs taken of the injuries reveal "a large goose egg on her forehead" and other bruises, records show.

SEE ABUSE A-17

# State quarter worth a lot of talk

► Oklahomans are upset over the "Pioneer Woman's" missing book, believed by many to be a Bible.

By ANGEL RIGGS  
World Capitol Bureau

OKLAHOMA CITY — The possibility that the Oklahoma quarter could feature a rendition of "The Pioneer Woman" statue minus a book that many believe to be the Bible has riled hundreds of Sooners.

Four of the five final designs for the Oklahoma quarter include visual references to Ponca City's "Pioneer Woman," a 30-foot-tall bronze statue depicting a stoic young mother, her son's hand firmly grasped in her left hand, a Bible in her right hand.



But on all four quarter designs, the woman's Bible is not included.

That is, if it's a Bible at all.

The book the woman holds is not identified, and several Oklahomans have suggested that it represents education or faith in general.

Others say the book is a Bible, and its omission is telling of the country's political correctness gone too far.

More than 143,000 votes had been cast for the design of the Oklahoma state quarter by late Friday afternoon, according to Gov. Brad Henry's office. Voting for Oklahoma's quarter ended at 5 p.m. Friday. The results are expected to be announced Monday.

Oklahoma's quarter, part of the U.S. Mint's 50 State Quarters Program, is to be distributed early next year.

Oklahomans made more than 1,000 suggestions for the quarter last year. Committees narrowed those suggestions to 10, then residents voted on the five that were submitted to the Mint to be mocked up.

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