

# Committee seeks cancer registry

AUSTIN (AP) — A special committee voted Monday to send word to the Legislature that it wants lawmakers to do whatever it takes to establish an official statewide list of cancer cases to help in the fight against that disease.

A preliminary recommendation would provide \$1 million in new state funds for a cancer registry.

The committee also tentatively recommended raising the age at which people may buy cigarettes and other tobacco products from 16 to 21.

Rep. Mike Millsap, D-Fort Worth, first suggested to the executive committee of the Legislative Task Force on Cancer that legislators consider "sanctions of some kind" against hospitals which do not report cancer cases.

The final motion, however, merely asked the Legislature to consider various ways of collecting cancer statistics.

Texas already has a cancer registry, but committee members said it is far from complete.

State Health Commissioner Robert Bernstein said data collected by his department "cover 70 percent of the cancer cases. We don't get to all the places, we don't have the people."

Committee member Mike Meyers, a Dallas businessman, asked if \$1 million was enough for a registry, and Bernstein said, "That's a very good question for this group and the Legislature and everybody else to decide. I think it's an important approach to the whole problem."

Millsap: "It's really not that great a burden for the larger hospitals."

Bernstein said, however, that taking away a hospital's certificate to operate for failing to report cancer cases "is out of the question."

Committee chairman Jim Dannenbaum, president of a Houston engineering company, suggested that "some of it is just overcoming the inertia to get it done."

Bernstein said the Legislative Budget Board had repeatedly cut the budget request for a cancer registry, and added, "It's a disgrace that we don't put more money" into public health programs.

Dr. Joseph Painter of M.D. Anderson Hospital, Houston, said the registry "has been totally underfunded since we began, and we've done a poor job as a result."

Myers said, "I sense that the registry has done nothing, and the money is wasted until we get everybody totally involved."

Myers said he is on the board at Parkland Hospital, Dallas, "and we don't even turn ours (statistics) in."