Contract Law Said Violated

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Attorney General William Guste says the state Department of Education violated the law in connection with a $339,000 printing contract.


Bruneau complained to his colleagues in the House on June 12 that the education department circulated 500 copies of a routine report and none of the copies contained information on how much the printing of the report cost the taxpayers.

A recently-passed state law requires that publication costs be printed on each copy of any report or news release of a state agency.

Bruneau told the House that he had investigated and found that the contract was granted to Multi-Media Inc. of Basile, which had not submitted the lowest bid.

He said the education department had thrown out the low bids and entered into a negotiated contract with Multi-Media.

Other firms had submitted bids as low as $255,000, he said.

"I think once somebody has to pay up, we won't have any more trouble with departments ignoring the law," Bruneau said.

The department can legally throw out bids and accept the higher bid if officials feel the highest bid is the "best" bid or throw out bids and enter into a negotiated contract if the agency feels that's best for the state.

A further check, Bruneau said, showed that Multi-Media had given Education Superintendent Kelly Nix a $2,500 contribution during the elected official's 1979 campaign.

Nix was in the hospital at the time, but his aides said that the law calling for publication of printing costs concerned only those reports or releases handled by the agency, and did not pertain to contracts with private firms.

A spokesman for Nix said he "will comply and will work with the attorney general to settle the matter....If it comes down to somebody having to reimburse the cost, he would personally pay it."

Guste, in the legal opinion, said the law covered both in-house publications and those printed for the state by private firms.

"It is my opinion that...the statutory requirement (is) applicable to publications printed under contracts as well as to those printed by an agency of state government," said the written opinion.

Guste declined to say what action he would take, but said: "The action to be taken by my office in compliance with (the law) relative to recovery of funds expended on the printing of the above mentioned publication will be dealt with in a separate future letter."