Guste sets meeting on creationism

BATON ROUGE (AP) - A crusader for Louisiana's creationism law says he will meet Monday with Attorney General William J. Guste Jr. to consider the next move following the Legislature's refusal to appropriate $100,000 to defend it.

"I was very disappointed," Sen. Bill Keith of Shreveport said Saturday. "Since the Legislature had passed the bill into law, I had hoped that enough legislators would see fit to pass the defense part."

"This is not just a little backwoods case, it's a case of national proportions," he said, adding that he thought $250,000 was needed to defend the law adequately.

The emergency money request from Guste was approved by the Interim Emergency Board Oct. 19 and submitted to a mail ballot of the legislature for ratification.

A spokesman for the board said the measure failed to get the required two-thirds majority, but said the exact total was unavailable. Keith said the appropriation failed to pass by just two votes.

Guste's initial request for the money in September also was rejected, but the attorney general said he thought he might fare better on a second ballot.

A spokesman for Guste said Friday that he would have no immediate comment on the latest vote.

Guste has said the money was critical to a successful defense of the creationism law, which is being challenged as unconstitutional by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The law, the only one of its kind in the nation, requires schools to teach alongside evolution the theory of creationism, which holds there is scientific evidence to support the Biblical account of man's creation.

Keith has started a private defense fund for the law. He said there was a steady flow of contributions "from all over America, but we're still considerably short of our goal." He declined to disclose the fund's present balance.