Roemer signs AIDS test repeal, other legislation

Capitol news bureau

Medical certificates will no longer be required of couples seeking marriage licenses as a result of Gov. Buddy Roemer's signing into law a bill approved by the 1988 Legislature.

The bill, HB586 by Rep. Jerry Thomas, D-Bogalusa, is in the latest batch of legislation on which Roemer has acted in recent days.

In the past, couples seeking marriage licenses had to submit medical certification that they are free of venereal diseases, including the AIDS virus, which attacks the body's immune system.

The medical certificate for venereal disease was a requirement for decades. Amid much controversy during the 1987 Legislature, lawmakers put on the books a special requirement for AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) testing.

Opponents said the testing would be done on a class of people — heterosexuals — who were least likely to carry a virus that is more prevalent among homosexuals and drug users.

Now, an application for a marriage license must be accompanied by a certified copy of each party's birth certificate and, in cases involving a minor, written consent to marry or the court's authorization for the minor to marry or both.

Roemer also has signed into law a bill that appropriates $225,000 to pay the legal expenses of Cynthia Porche, a state child protection worker acquitted on malfeasance charges in connection with the 1985 East Baton Rouge beating death of 3-year-old Joshua Gnaige.

Roemer also signed into law a bill requiring legislative approval of future appropriations to pay the legal expenses of state officials, officers or employees who are acquitted of crimes relating to their jobs.

The bill was filed in the wake of several state officials, including former Education Superintendent Tom Clausen and former Speaker Pro-tem Joe Delpt, D-Baton Rouge, being automatically paid with Department of Education and legislative funds, respectively, with no oversight.

Also becoming law with Roemer's signature were bills affecting the criminal justice system, including those which authorize home incarceration of certain offenders, repeal of a requirement that the state transport inmates to Louisiana residences when they are released, and allow as a condition of pardon and parole devotion to a reading program if the offender is unable to read English.

Other bills in the latest list of signings released by the Secretary of State's office include those which:

- Authorize issuance of sales tax revenue bonds by the city-parish government.

Certificates

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- to use sales tax proceeds to finance a major sewer system project.
- Designates La. Hwy. 66 in West Feliciana Parish as the Tunica Trace.
- Increase the expense allowance of the East Baton Rouge Tax Assessor to $400,000.
- Allow people to recoup a surcharge on tickets without being guilty of ticket scalping.
- Repeal of a state law authorizing refunds to industries that dispose of hazardous waste on-site.
- Increase of the maximum fine for vehicular negligent injuring from $500 to $1,000.
- Increase of the maximum fine for second and third offense DWI from $500 to $1,000.
- Allow women to use hyphenated names when registering to vote.
- Transfer the jurisdiction of Hot Wells, once a resort popular for its mineral water baths, to the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism which is authorized to enter into contracts and leases for its operation.
- Provide that the word 'LOUISIANA' shall appear on state license plates.
- Authorize the Department of Transportation and Development to contract for highway maintenance work — instead of doing it in-house.