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# CITY & STATE

Tuesday, March 16, 1993 Austin American-Statesman

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## Attorney tapped for civil rights position

### Clinton says Cantu uniquely qualified

By A. Phillip Brooks  
American-Statesman Staff

President Clinton has selected Norma Cantu, an attorney with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, to lead the U.S. Department of Education's civil rights office, White House officials said.

Cantu, 38, of San Antonio, has been a leader in several high-profile lawsuits aimed at equalizing per capita expenditures for Texas students who attend public schools and state-supported universities.

Clinton described Cantu as a "highly talented" individual with "unique qualifications" for the position.

Cantu declined to comment on the appointment Monday. Her appointment as an assistant secretary of education must be confirmed by the Senate.

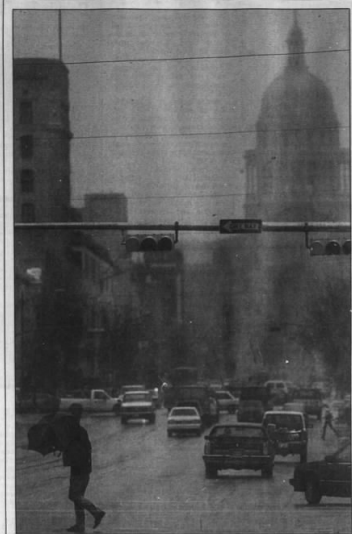
Several officials said her selection signals a change in direction for the Education Department, which has been criticized during the past year for its civil rights policies at public universities.

"Norma has been a strong, aggressive advocate for needed reform of secondary and higher education in Texas," said Texas Land Commissioner Carry Mestas, who was director of Clinton's presidential campaign in Texas.

"Her appointment sends a signal that the Clinton administration is serious about the enforcement of civil rights in education," Mestas said.

If confirmed, Cantu would succeed another Texas, Michael Williams, who served under President Bush.

Williams steered the education world  
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Walk on the wet side

Despite a steady drizzle and overcast skies outside at Congress Avenue and First Street, the through most of Monday, the Austinite ventured sun is expected to come out today.

## Officers added to help probe of 4 murders

### Investigators face 2,000 tips in 1991 killings at yogurt shop

By Kimberly Garcia  
American-Statesman Staff

To investigate 2,000 tips remaining to the killing of four teenagers at a yogurt shop, six more officers were assigned to the case Monday, bringing the task force staff to 18 Austin police Lt. Dave Parkinson said.

Investigators have no new leads, but will try to dispose of the remaining tips before the task force disbands in three months, Parkinson said.

"There simply comes a time when you spend as much time on a case without results and you have to move on," Parkinson said. "We're trying to recognize the task force is coming to an end. We need to get through the tips."

The task force was created shortly after four teen-age girls were slain Dec. 6, 1991, at 1 Can't

Believe it's Vagel! at 2949 W. Anderson Lane. The victims were Jennifer Harkness, 17, her sister Sarah, 16, Elias Thomas, 17, and Amy Ayres, 13. No one has been charged in the case.

Task force officers prioritized and investigated 2,000 of the 5,000 tips they collected. They will help from the new officers, they are expected to set priorities again and determine whether any of the last 2,000 tips will lead to suspects.

The tips concern people and objects, such as cars that may have been involved in the slayings, Parkinson said. If they get to the bottom of the list without solving the case, task force investigators will return to jobs they held before the slayings, Parkinson said.

Two homicide investigators will remain on the case after the task force is disbanded and Parkinson was slain Dec. 6, 1991, at 1 Can't

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## Execution proposed for child murderers

### Senate backs capital crime legislation

By Bruce Hight  
American-Statesman Staff

Millions of children under 6 could face the death penalty under legislation approved Monday by the Senate.

The bill now goes to the House, where Rep. Don Bonior, R-Austin, will carry it. Combs said he expects the legislation to win passage despite the failure of similar proposals in the past.

Gov. Ann Richards said she probably would sign the bill if it reaches her desk. The bill by Sen. Boster Brown, R-Lake Jackson, appears to satisfy Richards' concerns by excluding the prosecution of women who get abortions or doctors who perform abortions.

"I've been told that all of the concerns that I had about that bill just being a row for an abortion bill are cleared up, and I sure will sign the bill," said Richards, who supports abortion rights.

Richards said her measure would apply only to the murder of a child who is "born and alive."

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## Neighbors demand power plant be closed

By Mike Todd  
American-Statesman Staff

Two Austin City Council members said Monday that they want the city to investigate closing the Holly Power Plant, and neighborhood groups demanded that it be shut down immediately.

The East Austin plant, with large fuel storage tanks about 100 yards from the nearest house, was the site of a fuel spill and fire over the weekend.

"We want this bomb out of our

### 2 council members seek inquiry after fire

community — nothing less, nothing more," said Robert Dinsley of the East Town Lake Citizens Neighborhood Association.

In 1991, 10,000 gallons of fuel leaked from the plant, requiring a \$420,000 cleanup.

Although city utility officials say the Holly plant is safe, Council Members Gus Garcia and Charles Ulfrey said they're not so sure. They asked for a study of whether it

should be decommissioned.

No injuries or power disruptions were reported during the fire Saturday. Authorities said about 200 gallons of diesel fuel caught fire after leaking from a storage tank into a containment ditch.

Frank Ramirez, who lives a block from the plant, said members of his family feared for their lives when they saw the fire.

"We didn't know whether to run,

hide or what," he said. "We need to get rid of (the plant) ... move it out of town."

Ramirez, Dinsley and others spoke during a news conference led by Travis County Commissioner Marcos de Laine, who represents the East Austin area.

Neighbors have complained about noise, odor and safety problems for more than 20 years, de Laine said.

Earlier Monday, Garcia and Ulfrey said they're not so sure. They asked for a study of whether it

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## Reversing plan to release Joost files, judge cites proof of ongoing probe

By Debbie Hott  
American-Statesman Staff

Two months after he ordered the release of evidence in the death of a Buda family, a state district judge has decided the evidence held by the Department of Public Safety will remain undisclosed.

The ruling, received by attorney Monday, reverses a decision by Judge James Meyers in January that the DPS and Texas Rangers should allow relatives of David Joost and his family access to law enforcement files on the investigation of their deaths.

Joost, chief financial officer of the Texas Racing Commission, his wife, Susan, and their two children were found shot to death in their home in Buda on March 6, 1990.

In his letter to attorneys outlining his decision, Meyers said he was convinced by testimony at a Feb. 26 hearing that the Texas Rangers are conducting an ongoing investigation into the deaths, which originally were ruled murder-suicide.

Hays County Justice of the Peace Orles Hill last month changed her ruling to undetermined cause

### David and Susan Joost and their two children were found dead in Buda in 1990.

of death because of doubts she had about the original murder-suicide ruling.

"The undisputed testimony in this investigation that would be compromised if made public," Meyers states in his letter. "Some of those matters have surfaced following my letter of January 15."

Meyers, who declined comment, ordered the case reopened for six months or until the plaintiffs request another hearing.

John Phillips, attorney for the Joost family members seeking access to the evidence, said he is disappointed by the reversal, but said the judge has been fair.

Daniel Joost, David Joost's

brother, said he was disappointed by the judge's ruling, but encouraged by the possibility that the Rangers are conducting an ongoing investigation.

"If they convinced the judge that there is an investigation, maybe there is something there," he said. "It shows that maybe the state does have an ongoing case."

He said the family will be prepared to return to court in six months to make sure the Rangers are continuing their investigation or are ordered to release the evidence. Joost said the family members want access to the evidence in their private investigator, David Rain, can work with the DPS to see why they have called the deaths a case of murder-suicide.

Demetri Anastasiadis, the assistant attorney general representing the DPS, said he does not know if the Rangers will be prepared to release the evidence after six months.

"Six months will allow the development of the leads the court was told about," he said. "But it's hard to say when this thing will wind down."

## Laraine Benedikt enters council race

### City board member running for Place 3 backs 'fresh ideas'

By Bob Banta  
American-Statesman Staff

Marketing executive Laraine Benedikt said Monday that she will run for Place 3 on the City Council, advocating "fresh ideas that encompass the environmental, financial, human services and cultural needs of our city."

Benedikt, 46, who was born and raised in South Africa, came to Austin in 1976. She is a member of the city's zoning adjustment board and was chairman of the Austin Commission on the Status of Women.

"I believe government can work. But I see our local city government shifting to the left and to the right, usually on a single issue," she said.

Benedikt wants to create think tanks made up of residents and experts to develop realistic, long-range policies for the city.

Benedikt said she favors moving Robert Mueller Municipal Airport to Bergstrom but fears "the citizens don't think they're being given enough facts on that issue."

"I'm not sure the \$400 million (for moving to Bergstrom) is the right price tag," she said. "I know there are airports built for less."

Benedikt said she believes she



Laraine Benedikt

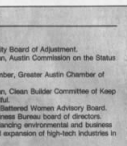
Age 46  
Cedarvale  
Member, city Board of Adjustment  
Chairwoman, Austin Commission on the Status of Women  
Board member, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce  
Chairwoman, Clean Builder Committee of Keep Austin Beautiful  
Center for Balanced Women Advisory Board  
Member Business Bureau board of directors  
Partners: financing environmental and business needs; supporting the location and expansion of high-tech industries in Austin; city support for the arts.

can successfully blend environmental protection and business needs.

"I think what the voters were saying in the vote for the Save Our Springs ordinance is that they want some form of environmental policy and that we need to continue to fine-tune it so that we have a broad policy for the future," she said.

Benedikt said she believes that high-tech opportunities should be encouraged to locate in Austin. She said the city should offer incentives to local computer companies that want to expand. "I think we are in a competitive situation," she said. "We have the chance to promote economic development and be able to control what comes in."

She said, "The city needs a poll-



cy of supporting all the arts in much the same way that we support the music industry."

Benedikt is the owner of Laraine Benedikt and Associates Inc. Her company provides marketing and sales services that include strategic planning, public relations and seminars on preparing bids and selling. Her clients include Scientific Methods Inc., MGI Engineering and Dell Computer Corporation.

Benedikt said this month that she would not run for re-election. Beside Benedikt, Jackie Goodman and Mark Tarkenton have announced they will run. Randy Robles and William B. Garmon have filed for the position. James Cooley said Jim Sted say they will announce their candidacies formally this week.

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