Boll weevil eradication

HB 1979 by Patterson et al./Sims

DIGEST: HB 1979 would have required — if approved by the state's cotton growers — the agriculture commissioner and a newly created cotton growers' boll weevil eradication foundation to develop and carry out programs to destroy and eliminate the cotton boll weevil in the state. The foundation's board of directors would have been elected by cotton growers. The foundation, upon local approval, would have been able to assess a fee on cotton growers in designated eradication zones for the programs. The agriculture department would have been authorized to inspect, quarantine, treat, monitor and destroy cotton fields, assess penalties and develop rules about planting.

GOVERNOR'S REASON FOR VETO: This bill is so weak that it is unlikely ever to take effect but in any case should not become law because there are no pesticide spraying safeguards; it does not require justification or proof of necessity before pesticide spraying; it violates the appointments tradition of the governor's office; and would cost the state $156,000 (per fiscal year, beginning in 1994.)

RESPONSE: Rep. Pete Patterson, author of HB 1979, called it a good environmental bill. "Unfortunately, someone misinformed the governor, and I'm disappointed that she denied me the opportunity to converse with her about the bill." He called the veto a setback for Texas cotton producers, who lose over $20 million a year to the boll weevil." We already have pesticide safeguards on the books, and the spraying in the boll weevil eradication program would be very controlled and targeted. Over a period of time, less spraying would be necessary than is being done today. The boll weevil eradication foundation board would be elected by cotton producers, and this is consistent with the procedures for other commodity boards. The cost to the state of $156,000 is a small price to pay for an expected eventual 70 percent decrease in pesticide spraying by cotton producers."

NOTES: HB 1979 was analyzed in the May 8 *Daily Floor Report.*