

Nov. 8 made holiday for school employees, students

By MARK LAMBERT
Advocate staff writer

The School Board, acting as the direction of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, decided on Thursday to name presidential election day, Nov. 8, a holiday for all school employees and students.

Associate Superintendent Donald Hoover said the day probably won't be made up this school year, so the day effectively becomes a paid holiday for teachers and other employees.

In 1984, BESE mandated that all school systems in the state declare the day of a presidential election a school holiday, School Board President Robert Crawford said.

Several public schools are used as polling places, and voting for the

general election would interfere with normal activities at the schools.

School officials weren't sure how much money the day off will cost. In January of last year, the board decided to shut schools down for one day to save money, and officials said the move saved the system about \$550,000. Since that time, employees have received two pay raises.

Actually, the day off won't cost the public school system any money, since it already had scheduled Nov. 8 as a school day. Instead, teachers and other employees will receive a day's pay for not working, and the school system will lose one day of school.

Hoover said teachers are paid for 180 days of school, 177 of which are teaching days and three of which are planning days. Since the state mandates that school systems offer 175 days of instruction, the School Board still has

one extra day on which it can call off school for an emergency, such as bad weather.

However, if the board were to call off two additional days of school for an emergency, one day would have to be made up before the end of school in order for the system to operate within state law.

In other action Thursday, the board agreed to hold a special meeting at 5 p.m. Tuesday to consider placing temporary buildings at different schools to relieve overcrowded conditions.

The placement of temporary buildings in schools must be approved by U.S. District Judge John V. Parker, who presides over the desegregation lawsuit against the School Board.

The board originally wanted to have the superintendent's staff ask Parker to place buildings at whichever schools

most needed the buildings, but board attorney Robert Hammonds said Parker probably will want the board to name the specific schools at which the buildings are to be placed.

Officials said temporary buildings are needed at several schools, including Polk and Bernard Terrace elementary schools. Assistant Superintendent Grady Hazel said there could be "seven or eight" schools that need the buildings to alleviate overcrowding.

Officials have explained that, as the board has moved to smaller pupil-teacher ratios, classes with fewer students take up as much room as larger classes once used. The situation has been compounded by an increase in the number of students attending public schools, particularly at the elementary level.

Dick Eiche, executive director of the East Baton Rouge Parish Association of

Educators, said some schools don't have enough desks or textbooks for students, and he has called on the staff to make short-term and long-term plans to deal with overcrowding in the schools.

In a related matter, the board agreed to direct the staff to come up with a short-term plan to correct the overcrowding. The board's Management and Planning Services Committee is scheduled to hear a preliminary report on "possible short-term solutions to the classroom overcrowding situation and the 20 to 1 student-teacher ratio for kindergarten through third grade."

Although the state has provided extra money to school systems to try to get K-3 classes to a 20-1 pupil-teacher ratio, East Baton Rouge Parish has neither the space nor the teachers to reduce class sizes.

In other matters, the board agreed to a revised 1988-89 general fund budget that includes pay raises for teachers and a projected 3 percent increase in sales tax revenues.

The board voted 10-0-1 to accept the new budget. Board member Frank Millican abstained, and board member Press Robinson had not arrived at the meeting by the time the vote was taken.

The revised budget shows anticipated revenues of \$184,097,276. Compared to the 1987-88 budget, the new budget shows nearly \$9.3 million more in revenue.

Much of the increase is from the state's Minimum Foundation Program, state government's main source of revenue to local school systems. The state, through its MFP, is appropriating \$55.7 million to East Baton Rouge — a 34 percent increase over 1987-88 fiscal year.

However, officials have pointed out that the state is withdrawing funds from other areas, such as the state's share of contribution to the teacher retirement system and the state's share of group insurance. Each of those items

represent \$7 million less than the local system will receive.

The budget predicts a 3 percent increase in local sales tax revenues. Last year, the board anticipated receiving the same amount of money in sales taxes as it did the previous year. Instead, those revenues increase by more than \$1.3 million.

The budget also shows a standstill in the amount of money raised through property taxes.

On the expense side of the budget, the staff anticipates hiring 2,390 classroom teachers — 40 more than last year — for a total expense of \$54,970,000. The extra teachers, coupled with a state and local pay raise, will cost the system an extra \$3,467,575, when compared to last year's budget.

The budget also anticipates hiring 26 more special education teachers for an added expense of \$1,354,682.

Other major expense increases from 1987-88 to 1988-89 include \$3,817,778 more in teacher retirement and \$1,050,238 more in group insurance.

Also on Thursday, the board accepted low bids to buy 79 new school buses from three companies.

The school system's purchasing director, Jim Carroll, said officials originally intended to buy only 72 buses, but the bids were lower than expected, so they suggested that the board buy more buses.

The board unanimously voted to buy buses from Shapiro International, University Ford and Eddie Edwards Bus Sales for a total price of \$2,019,439.84.

The board agreed to buy five mini buses from Shapiro for a cost of \$130,871.80. Shapiro also was awarded a contract for 61 165-horsepower diesel buses at a cost of \$1,634,538.04.

University Ford was awarded the contract for five 36-passenger buses at a cost of \$110,120, and Eddie Edwards was given the contract for eight Superior GMC buses at \$143,910.

Jackson addresses Shreveport strife at news conference

By BILL McMAHON
Capitol news bureau

The Rev. Jesse Jackson said Thursday he has talked to some ministers in Shreveport about the racial conflict that broke out Tuesday night after the shooting of a young black man by a white woman.

"We're interested," said Jackson, but the former Democratic presidential candidate said he has no immediate plans to go to Shreveport or be involved in mediating the conflict.

Before holding a news conference, Jackson met with workers from the BASF plant and environmentalists, telling them greater care must be taken in preserving the environment.

"We can no longer be the dumping

ground for the nation's waste," Jackson told the some 30 individuals who met with him. Some of those present were members of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers labor union seeking recognition at the BASF plant in Geismar.

The OCAW has been locked out of the plant for more than four years. Some have been rehired, however.

"The world is being threatened by this madness," said Jackson, referring to the greenhouse effect that threatens the world with higher temperatures. "The Earth is finite."

In talking to reporters, Jackson said he is watching developments in Shreveport.

Jackson said he has not made a decision to go to the north Louisiana

city.

He contrasted Shreveport, where there is "division based upon race and violence and search for scapegoats to explain away deeper problems" with Baton Rouge, "where people black and white, male and female, are forming a dynamic coalition of jobs and justice and development and peace."

Jackson said that people in Shreveport "have struggled long and hard for public accommodation and the right to vote. And in that city today, we must make the appeal for the haves and the have nots, the black and the white to come together and study war no more."

Jackson flew into Baton Rouge Wednesday night for a rally on the Southern University campus, where he voiced his support for presidential

candidate Michael Dukakis and 8th District congressional candidate Faye Williams of Alexandria.

On Thursday, after meeting with workers and representatives of the Greenpeace organization and the state Department of Environmental Quality, Jackson held a news conference and then left for a scheduled tour of the Petro Processors hazardous waste site north of the city. He was also scheduled to stop at the grave of LSU basketball great Pete Maravich.

He was then scheduled to fly to Washington.

Jackson said his trip to Louisiana was being paid for partially by the Democratic National Committee in its support of the Democratic ticket of Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis and Texas Sen. Lloyd Bentsen.

Environmental health assembly set for N.O.

A scientific assembly for doctors, attorneys and community leaders on the topic of environmental health will be held Oct. 7-8 at the Doubletree Hotel in New Orleans.

Dr. Steven Levin of Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, Dr. David Ozonoff of Boston University School of Medicine, Dr. Laura Welch of George Washington University Medical Center, Dr. Samuel Epstein of University of Illinois School of Public Health and Dr. Gary Gillen of the Ohio State

University College of Medicine are among the scheduled speakers.

Topics will include reproductive system toxicity, neurotoxicity and immunotoxicity.

The conference meets the criteria for 14.5 hours in Category I of the Physicians Recognition Award of the American Medical Association and a maximum of 14.5 prescribed hours by the American Academy of Family Physicians, according to conference sponsors.

Registration information can be obtained from Jeff Daigle of the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, which is co-sponsoring the event with Citizens Clearing House for Hazardous Waste and the Ohio State University Department of Family Medicine.

Swaggart

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was reported to be on vacation.

The Gulfstream II is considered the Rolls-Royce of corporate aircraft and is one of the fastest, according to literature on the aircraft. The jet has a transcontinental or transoceanic range and seats up to 19 passengers. It flies at a speed of nearly 600 miles per hour at 43,000 feet. The plane is powered by two Rolls-Royce Spey turbofan engines.

Although the price of the Swaggart Ministries jet is not known, a Gulfstream II built at the same time as Swaggart's was advertised recently for \$5.25 million.

The aircraft was used for Swaggart Ministries business, and in February the Rev. Jimmy Swaggart flew in the plane to meet with the executive council of the Assemblies of God church in Springfield, Mo., which later voted to bar him from the pulpit for one year and

eventually defrocked him from the denomination.

Swaggart has admitted to committing an undisclosed "sin," and his worldwide ministries has suffered since the disclosure.

Construction work at the Swaggart Ministries complex on Bluebonnet has halted and enrollment at the Jim and Swaggart Bible College is reported to be down at least 72 percent over 1987 enrollment.

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