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UNDER THE DOME

Texas government Spend-o-Meter goes online

Perry in 2010? Bumper stickers taking both sides.

Saturday, July 12, 2008

Group offers a new spin on government spending

The Texas Public Policy Foundation debuted its Texas

BudgetSource.com this week, a new Web site that the free-market group hopes will become a one-stop portal to budget sites for state government as well as for every Texas city and school district (only about a third have their budgets on the Internet now).

The Dome's favorite gimmick is the Spend-o-Meter — a kind of spinning odometer for state spending.

Stare at it too long, and you can get dizzy.

Touch the scroll bar on the side of the screen, however, and you stop the Spend-o-Meter in its tracks.

Virtual conservatives can accomplish what their real-life counterparts haven't been able to do since taking over all the levers of state government in 2003.

— Laylan Copelin

Watson rises to the occasion

Like most politicians, state Sen. Kirk Watson, D-Austin, knows a thing or two about being on the hot seat.

But at a recent "town hall" meeting with employees at one of Austin's corporate headquarters, Watson experienced the high seat.

"The room was set up so that those who came to visit were seated in a 'U,' with a stool in the middle for me to sit," recounted Watson, who often jokes about his, well, shortish height.


"It was a tall stool, I guess both to be stylish and to elevate me a little. It seemed tall enough that I felt like I needed to sort of climb up on it."

Lesson learned: "Let's just say there's no way to look 'senatorial' when your feet are dangling several inches above the ground. Thank goodness I have excellent balance."

— Mike Ward

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