EASTERN FEDERAL THEATERS Chapel Hill

School bond campaign heats up for fall vote

■ The legislature approved a \$1.8 billion referendum for school improvements.

> BY ANDREW ROSE STAFF WRITE

As the November elections near, local legislators and school officials are confident that the state-wide bond referendum passed by the General Assembly

this summer will win public approval.

In its short session, the General Assembly approved a \$1.8 billion referendum to fund improvements in the state's schools. Currently, there is a \$6 million backlog in school construction in North

The bill states that the money will be distributed largely in proportion to each school system's average daily attendance. The legislature set aside \$30 million for small counties which are entitled to additional funding under state laws.

The referendum would reward school systems that help themselves. In order to receive state bond money, each local school system is required to raise matching funds according to their economic

Sen. Teena Little, R-Moore, voted in favor of the referendum. "Our needs are greater than that, but it's a good start,"
Little said. "It should be effective because it is based on local matching dollars. "Our local school systems have been very successful in obtaining that type of

Rep. Joe Hackney, D-Orange, also voted for the legislation. "There is a press-ing need for additional facilities in our schools," said Hackney. "I'm very confident that the public will support their schools. All of the local school boards

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to me that they could raise the matching funds." Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, which stands to receive \$11 million un-

supported the referendum and indicated

der the proposed plan, is eager to direct the money into new construction. A new elementary school, a new middle school, and an expansion on the brand-new East Chapel Hill High School will be the primary uses of the money, said Kim Hoke, a representative of the school system.

"Raising the local matching funds will be no problem since we raised \$52 mil-

be no problem since we raised \$52 million in a local bond referendum in 1992. I believe that some of the \$52 million is still available for us, but if not, we have many options and can easily raise the money," Hoke said.

money," Hoke said.

The system is preparing to raise more cash through an extension of the special district tax on property owners and possibly another local bond referendum.

East Chapel Hill High School, which opened its doors for the first time two weeks ago, is already slated for expansion. "It's adequate for now, but by the year 2000 we expect its enrollment to reach at least 1,500," said Hoke.

Wake County which just passed a

Wake County, which just passed a \$400 million countywide bond, also finds itself well-funded. It stands to receive an additional \$123 million under the state referendum. Other local counties would benefit greatly from passage of the referendum. Durham County would receive \$22.5 million, Chatham County would receive \$7.5 million, and Orange County would receive approximately \$6 million.



Investigators still seeking clues in lake drownings

UNION, S.C. — How a truck with five people inside rolled into the lake where Susan Smith drowned her sons still puzzled investigators Tuesday after an autopsy ruled out any medical prob-lems with the driver.

The five, plus two people who dove in after them, all drowned, Union County Coroner William Holcombe said.

There was no evidence that the driver,

Tim Phillips, had a heart attack or seizure, so authorities will look for mechanical failure or possible alcohol or drug use to explain how the truck got into John D. Long Lake, said Union County Sheriff Howard Wells.

No skid marks were found on the embankment where the vehicle rolled into the lake. Divers found the transmission in "park" and the ignition still on,

but the parking brake was not engaged. Authorities were investigating whether Phillips had accidentally knocked the gear shift out of park or if there had been a mechanical failure.

The sheriff said he would ask General Motors Corp., which made the 1987 GMC Sierra Suburban, for help to deter-

mine what happened.
Phillips; his wife, Angie; and their three children, Courtney, 4; Meleana, 1; and Kinsleigh, 4 months, all drowned.
Also killed were the children's 3-year-old

playmate Austin Dakota Roodvoets, and Carl Sidney White, 29, a family friend who dived into the lake with Mrs. Phillips to try and rescue them.

The vehicle, with Phillips and the four

children still inside, rolled into the lake after Mrs. Phillips got out, along with White and his girlfriend, Sonya Phillip, and her two daughters.

Divers found it upside down in 20 feet of water, about 80 feet from the bank. Wells said the lack of any indication of heart failure or that Phillips blacked out "makes us look more toward toxicology alcohol or any drugs in the body."

Homemade bomb found in church that Pope will visit

LA ROCHE-SUR-YON, France A parish priest found what experts said Tuesday was a homemade bomb in the basilica of a church that Pope John Paul

II will visit this month.
The bomb was discovered Monday in a crypt of the St. Laurent-sur-Sevre church in La Roche-sur-Yon in France's western Brittany region.
The device was hidden near the foot of

a tomb holding the remains of Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, one of two 18th-century French clerics the pope plans to honor on his Sept. 19 to 22 visit. Beneath the bomb was an inscription

in a garbled mixture of Latin and French — "in nomine pape poum," or "in the name of the pope, boom."

Bomb disposal experts defused it, and no one was injured.

Russia, Chechen rebels nearing peace agreement

MOSCOW — Russia's peace pact with Chechen rebels won the closest thing to a presidential endorsement Tuesday.
Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin said Boris Yeltsin backs the peace pact

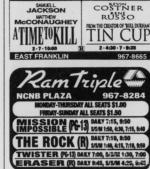
negotiated over the weekend by security chief Alexander Lebed to end the un-popular 21-month war in the southern ublic. But Yeltsin himself kept quiet on the accord.

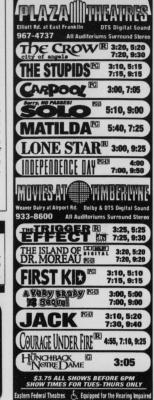
Chernomyrdin also admitted for the first time that the Kremlin had made "grave mistakes" in Chechnya, while Lebed said tens of thousands more people died in the war than had been estimated previously.

Lebed said the fighting has killed as

many as 90,000 people, a figure far higher than the 30,000 formerly cited. By all accounts, most of the victims were civilians. The prime minister, speaking to reporters in the southern Russian city of Nalchik, said previous peace efforts "were not resolute or consistent enough," ac-cording to the ITAR-Tass news agency. He did not elaborate.
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