

Texas County reverses Vote on Apple Computer

Georgetown, TX

In an about-face from a decision just days prior, Williamson (Texas) county's five-member commission voted in mid December to approve a revised tax benefits plan that clears the way for Apple Computer to bring its nine-building \$80 million support facility to Round Rock, a Williamson county city a short distance north of Austin. It is not unusual for a lawmaking body to approve benefits in order to attract a company and a significant number of jobs to the area. What is unusual is that just a few days previously the county commissioners voted to turn down the \$750,000 tax break for the computer manufacturer, saying it opposed Apple's policy of extending benefits to same sex partners of employees. That decision led to national media coverage and created a waiting list of other cities across the country, including nearby Austin, that said they

would welcome Apple with open arms. Austin offers city employees benefits coverage similar to that of Apple.

The issue became a political as well as a moral one, with the Texas Republican Committee supporting the commissioners and Ann Richards, the Texas Democratic governor, encouraging Apple to keep the facility and its 700 jobs in the state. One commissioner, David Hays, was the center of the controversy. Initially Hays was one of the three commissioners to vote against the tax breaks for Apple. One week later Hays changed his vote, supporting the revised tax abatement plan, after the new agreement gave the county the right of way for the roads and about \$1 million in improvements to the proposed Apple site. "Until last Tuesday I never had to choose between economic development and traditional family values," Hays told the British news service Reuters. He said his vote switch does not signal a change in his values, but is "merely an acknowledgment that Apple has the right to come into Williamson County under a very favorable economic relationship for the people of our county." Construction is expected to begin on the new plant, which could eventually employ as many as 1,700 in the Spring and is expected to be completed in 1995 according to an Apple spokesperson. Local officials estimate the indirect impact could mean as many as 4,000 new jobs in the county.

"Today's vote is a victory," said David M. Smith, NGLTF Director of Public Information who attended the second vote in Georgetown, Texas. "Jobs prevailed over prejudice. Apple is coming to Williamson County and the company's domestic partner benefits policy remains intact." "The debate in the past week has assisted and ed

ucated Williamson County residents as to who gay and lesbian people are, and has let them know that gay and lesbian people live here," Smith said. "And the debate will help Austin fight off a Right Wing attack to repeal its domestic partner benefits ordinance." (AOL News Service, NGLTF)

Official Statement from Dell Computer 12/07/93

"Recent statements on both America Online and CompuServe, implying that Dell is not living up to its commitment to the equal and fair treatment of its employees, are patently false. We would like to set the record straight.

Dell is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to a diverse workforce. The company does not discriminate against any individual or any group of individuals for any reason whatsoever. Dell also gladly complies with all laws, statutes and ordinances (including those relating to discrimination) everywhere the company does business.

While Dell does not offer its employees non-married partner benefits, research conducted by our benefits department indicates that our benefits program is competitive with other companies in our industry, and compares favorably with other companies our size in other industries, and in other regions of the country.

It is inappropriate for any governmental body or special interest group to attempt to influence Dell's, or any other company's benefits policies. If the comments being made about Dell are aimed at pressuring the company into changing its benefits policy, these tactics will not be successful." ▼



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