1978

Edward Bennett Named Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance

Commission for Blacks

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Recommendation Citation

Commission for Blacks, "Edward Bennett Named Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance" (1978). Faculty and Staff Reports and Communications.
http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_blackfacultyreports/74
Blanton Says He Signed All Clemency Cases During Term

Starts on Page One

In the grand jury investigation, while the state attorney's office is advising Blanton on the Chancery Court suit seeking to block him from further exercise of his executive clemency powers.

Correction Commissioner C. Murray Henderson said he spent "a few minutes" answering questions before the panel, most of them on the case of Eddie Denton, convicted in a 1975 shootout at a Newport tavern that left four persons dead. He is serving a 60-year sentence and said he intended no harm to anyone.

"I never asked me about that (the Denton case) and several others that I wasn't even familiar with," said Henderson after his testimony. "I answered every question they asked." Henderson earlier repeated a denial of state charges that he was a 'piece of the pie' from an alleged planned payoff.

Meanwhile, a Democrat gubernatorial candidate John Jay Hooker Friday renewed his call for Blanton's resignation following reports that the Governor may issue more commutations before leaving office Jan. 20.

Bennett Takes New Job

Edward K. Bennett, UT personnel director since 1972, has been named assistant vice chancellor for business and finance at UT's Knoxville campus. Mr. Bennett was identified incorrectly Friday as Assistant vice president for business and finance.

Blanton's Pardons Set

NASHVILLE (UPI) — Gov. Ray Blanton has issued a record number of pardons, commutations and early releases to Tennessee inmates. His newly appointed legal aide says there will likely be more coming before the Governor leaves office next month.

"We didn't get into specific cases, but he told me that he probably will issue some more commutations before the end of his term," said Robert Lillard, Blanton's legal aide.

Blanton has granted 329 commutations, 184 early releases and 38 pardons and revoked 35 commutations during his four-year term — a record for one administration in recent history.

Tennessee's last four governors have issued a total of 1868 pardons, commutations and early releases to inmates since 1963, according to state records.

Although the late Gov. Frank Clement handled out more commutations, Blanton signed more early releases, in part, because of a court order to relieve prison overcrowding.

The Governor issued 483 commutations, eight reprieves and 20 pardons and three revocations.

Democrat Buford Ellington issued 178 commutations, 12 reprieves and 22 pardons while serving as governor.

Republican Gov. Winfield Dunn signed 493 commutations, 13 reprieves and 25 pardons.

"The arrogance of Gov. Blanton in indicating that he will issue further commutations under these circumstances is an affront to every Tennessean," Hooker said.

"I think the Democratic party should speak with one voice and call for the resignation of Ray Blanton. A lot of people are saying, 'why are you trying to get him out when he only has 30 days left?' It doesn't make any difference whether he has 30 days or 30 minutes as long as he has that fountain pen and can let dangerous criminals out on the street."