

# Feazell supporters ignore indictment

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WACO, Texas (AP) — A day after he was indicted on charges he misused his office for personal gain, McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell kicked off his re-election campaign before hundreds of cheering supporters.

"I'm in a fight — pray for me," he told the crowd of more than 400 gathered under a tent at the Heart O' Texas Fairgrounds. "I may go down, but I'll go down doing what's right."

Feazell, 35, was arrested at the McLennan County Courthouse Wednesday on a 12-count federal indictment alleging he told certain defense attorneys to increase their legal fees and pass on a portion of the money to him in exchange for favorable settlement of criminal cases.

"When I walked into that courtroom (Wednesday) and saw it was standing room only with friends and faces I recognized, it brought tears to my eyes," Feazell said in his speech at the Thursday rally. "Not tears of sadness at what had happened, but tears of joy, knowing I have friends who will stand by me."

Elected to office in 1982, Feazell, a Democrat, faces re-election in November.

He says he will not give up his office, and that the charges against him are retaliation by the Department of Public Safety for his criticism of their work in investigating the series of killings claimed by Henry Lee Lucas.

Many of Lucas' confessions later proved to be false, with other evidence showing he could not have committed the crimes, as the Rangers and DPS alleged.

"Our democracy is in danger," Feazell told the crowd from a low bandstand at one end of the tent.

"Before, we faced the enemy outside our door and across the seas. Now the enemy is within."

"Amen," the crowd responded.

"I am afraid that if we continue on this road, we're heading for Big Brotherism that will make the McCarthy era look like a picnic," Feazell said. "It's frightening to think that if you cross the wrong people, you can be next."

He lashed out at allegations that he mishandled driving while intoxicated cases.

"I was elected by the voters to use my discretion," Feazell said. "I was elected by the voters to see justice done. To prosecute hard when it needed to be hard, and to give mercy when mercy needed to be given."

Former Congressman W.R. (Bob) Poage also was outraged at Feazell's treatment.

"The way they handled this case can only be interpreted as a political effort," Poage said at the rally. "They didn't have to parade him around like a Roman circus. They knew all they

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had to do was pick up the phone and tell him to come down to the court."

Poage said he knew nothing of Feazell's guilt or innocence, but said "I resent bitterly the way the U.S. courts are being used to affect this election. A thing like this hasn't happened since Reconstruction."

McLennan County Democratic Party chairman Gene Evans, watching from outside the tent, wondered aloud about the motivation behind the controversy.

"I think that before (Wednesday), he was going to win," Evans said. "I think (Wednesday) is going to help him win bigger. If it was politically motivated, it was a big mistake."

In July 1985, Feazell said he feared he might be murdered or wrongly indicted because he had criticized law enforcement agencies working on cases involving Lucas.

At the time, a federal grand jury was meeting in Austin to investigate allegations of corruption in Feazell's office.

Feazell termed the investigation a retaliatory "witch hunt" prompted by the DPS after Feazell criticized a DPS task force's handling of the Lucas cases.

A McLennan County grand jury investigated Lucas' confessions in 1985 and declined to indict Lucas in any of three Waco-area slayings to which he had confessed.

Lucas, who once claimed responsibility for hundreds of slayings nationwide, later recanted, saying he was trying to discredit law officers.

Col. Jim Adams, DPS director, has denied that the investigation or charges against Feazell were politically motivated.