

totaling \$1.1 million.

The Office of Risk Management manages claims filed against the state for damage to automobiles as a result of road defects.

In April, authorities announced

told others about locations on roads about which people had made legitimate claims and the state considered itself liable.

The person making the false claim would submit copies of a vehicle reg-

istered and executed the fraud scheme with the help of the other defendants.

Also named as defendants are two other people who worked for Risk Management at the time, Annette Carroll, a claims unit clerk, and

to commit money laundering, \$20,000 to \$100,000; two counts of theft more than \$500; one count of obstruction of justice.

Emerson, Carroll and Zanders could not be reached for comment Friday afternoon.

\$1.1 million awarded for fatal wreck in Baker

By MICHELLE MILLHOLLON

Advocate staff writer

A jury awarded \$1.1 million late Thursday to the family of a Zachary High School honor graduate killed three years ago in a traffic accident.

Nancy and Ronny Lockett sued the state Department of Transportation and Development after their 18-year-old daughter, Katy, died in a two-vehicle collision at La. 19 and Groom Road in Baker on July 18, 1998.

Katy Lockett was a passenger in a

Mazda that tried to turn east, or left, onto Groom Road and was hit by a northbound pickup, said the Locketts' attorney, Leonard Cardenas III.

The driver of the Mazda, Miranda Britt, didn't see the pickup in the outside lane because another oncoming car was stopped to turn west on Groom Road, Cardenas said.

Cardenas argued that the intersection is dangerous. He said requests

have been made since 1997 for a turning lane. "It's just a real bad intersection," he said.

DOTD's attorney, Ronnie Berthelot, refused to comment on the case, saying he doesn't speak to news reporters.

However, in a pre-trial order prepared by both sides, the state said Britt could have waited for the green arrow before turning or inched forward until her vision was clear.

Jurors found Britt 35 percent neg-

ligent in the accident.

Cardenas said she won't have to pay those damages because no claim was brought against her.

The state's liability totals about \$700,000. State law sets a \$500,000 cap on general damages, Cardenas said.

He said he plans to argue the cap should be applied separately to each parent, which would mean the Locketts could collect up to \$500,000 each.

Bid renewed for distributing funds to schools

By WILL SENTELL

Capitol news bureau

State aid to public schools may soon depend on how students fare in the classroom.

A 34-member commission on Friday began a new bid to revamp the way public schools are financed. The group hopes to make some recommendations for lawmakers to consider next year.

The state currently parcels out about \$2.4 billion a year to public schools. Leaders of the commission repeatedly said they hope to change the state's complex distribution methods so that high-performing schools are rewarded and troubled schools are somehow sanctioned.

The goal, educators said, is to bol-

ster state efforts to improve student performance by linking test scores, dropout rates and other factors to how much public schools get from the state each year.

"We have a perfect opportunity with accountability," said state House Education Chairman Carl Crane, R-Baton Rouge, a member of the panel. "We ought to seize the moment."

Paul Pastorek of New Orleans, president of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, said he thinks the panel can come up with pilot projects in the next four or five months that link state aid with student performance.

"That is really what we ought to focus on," he said.

One option, Pastorek said after the

meeting, is to offer financial rewards to high-performing school districts and penalties for troubled schools.

Another option would allow the state, through its funding methods, to change the way troubled school districts are allocating their resources.

Gov. Mike Foster set up the commission through an executive order. The panel includes teacher unions, superintendents, school boards, business groups and lawmakers.

A slightly different commission studied school finance methods for five months and ended its work in March, 2000. Its key recommendations died in the Legislature. The current panel plans to study school finance issues for at least a year and may recommend sweeping changes in the way public

schools are funded.

Commissioner of Administration Mark Drennen, another panel member, said the state needs to devise a way to link state aid with student performance. Schools that fail to meet state-mandated performance goals should face consequences, Drennen said.

Critics contend that Louisiana's current method for funding public schools makes the state vulnerable to a lawsuit.

Some school districts get a disproportionate amount of aid from state sources while others are heavily dependent on local aid.

Some districts that are supposed to get 65 percent of their money from the state get 75 percent, and others get less than they are entitled to.

Report urges oversight of contract legal service

By The Associated Press

Louisiana government agencies that contract with outside attorneys for legal work need to do more to

For example, state agencies had

more than \$30 million in attorney contracts in the year studied.

The report says agencies often fail to conduct studies to determine

contracts and expenses.

"The potential for inefficiencies and favoritism can be reduced by formally analyzing each entity's

agencies, 18 local groups and 372

state and local legal services contracts.

State agencies have