

Committee considers increasing speed limit

SALEM (AP) — Oregonians could begin flying along certain highways at 75 mph after lawmakers heard testimony Friday on a bill upping speed limits from 65 mph on interstate highways.

Under the proposal, passenger cars would be able to go 10 mph faster than the current limit. It also ups the speed limit on state highways to 65 mph. Certain vehicles, such as trucks and school buses, would have to stick to the 55-mph limit on interstate and state highways.

Republican state Rep. Cliff Bentz of Ontario sponsored the bill. Safety improvements to vehicles, such as air bags, GPS systems and seatbelts, mean the current speed limits are no longer as necessary to keep drivers safe, he said. He also noted motorists used to be able to drive along at 75 mph before the speed limits were dropped to help save gas in the early 1970s.

“The problem is that at one time we did drive at 75 mph way before the cars were as safe as they are now and the state survived,” Bentz said. He also noted boosting the speed limit could help bring the state closer together by allowing people living in rural areas to travel faster.

Troy Costales, an administrator at the state Department of Transportation, cautioned lawmakers at the public hearing that increasing the speed limit might lead to more crashes and fatalities.

“While we can change the laws of man, we can’t change the laws of nature. When speed goes up for every 10 miles an hour it doubles the energy released when something happens. So a small mistake becomes a big mistake at the higher speeds,” Costales said.

The Oregon Speed Zone Review Panel did a review of speed limits on interstate highways in 2004, Costales said, after a law allowed the agency to establish speeds up to 70 mph for passenger vehicles and 65 mph for trucks on interstate highways. They decided the safety of drivers outweighed any benefit that came with raising the speed limit.

This isn’t the first effort to increase speed limits. In 2011, two Republicans tried to amend legislation to raise the speed limit in rural Oregon interstates to 75 mph. Former Gov. John Kitzhaber also vetoed a 1999 attempt to raise the speed limit.

Of a certain age...

By Diane Goble
Columnist

I know I came into this room for a reason. Let’s see. I got an email from my daughter telling me about ... what the heck did she tell me? OK, back to the computer, read the email again. Hmmm no, no clue why I felt I had to go into my bedroom to get a ... what? Nope, no idea. Also no idea why I’m standing here with the refrigerator door open staring at cold food. I’m not hungry. It’s not time to fix a meal. Did I suddenly need to check expiration dates?

Maybe I should call my daughter. Where’s my phone? After looking everywhere at least three times I have to go over to my neighbor and ask her to call my cell phone. Oh right, there it is, in my bathrobe pocket where I put it last night. Now why was I looking for my phone? Who was I going to call? Maybe a warm bath would help.

I better check my calendar. Oh no, I’m supposed to be at a meeting right now. Where are my notes? My wallet? My car keys? I always forget at least one thing. I start the car to let it warm up while I run back inside to get... ? What did I come back to get? And where did I see it last?

I came across a healthy brain checklist (mccare.com), which starts out asking if I require assistance

remembering appointments, family occasions or taking medications.

Well, if I didn’t keep a calendar I’m sure I would, but even then occasionally I’m so engrossed in writing that I forget to check the clock and suddenly get a call that I forgot to pick up my granddaughter from the elementary school. I found online-stopwatch.com that I can set (when I remember to do so) to give me a heads-up to get ready to go.

Next this brain checklist asks me to check each symptom that is causing me increasing difficulty compared to the past. I’m happy to report most of my problems are symptoms of normal aging, not impending dementia.

However, if I start to notice I’m forgetting important details of things I’ve done recently, forgetting to do things I said I’d do, forgetting recent events or conversations, retelling stories or jokes to the same person, and having trouble completing complex tasks at work or home, such as balancing my checkbook, planning projects, or forgetting a recipe I’ve cooked many times, I might want to mention it to my doctor at my next annual checkup.

Depression can sneak up on us, too, as we age. If you can’t stop feeling down or

blue, that all the pleasure and joy has gone from life; feeling hopeless about the future, that everything is such an effort; feeling low energy or slowing down a lot comparatively speaking, tell your doctor because it could just be your diet, your medications might need to be adjusted, or your body is just telling you to get out of the house and take a short walk every day — and listen to the birds singing just for you.

♦ ♦ ♦

I wrote this column several weeks ago — before my friend Kelsey Collins ran out of gas, as she put it. Not that my advice above would have refilled her tank and she never asked for my advice anyway. Her way of covering up her pain was to become the opposite, to transmute that energy into compassion for others, and she became consumed by that passion until there was nothing left to give and it was time to move on. I saw a determination in her the last week of her life but I didn’t understand why.

The weekend before, she among four of us met and talked about how we could facilitate family conversations about end-of-life wishes and filling out Advance Healthcare Directives. Kelsey assured us that she had all her paperwork in order and those involved knew her last

wishes.

All of us in this group have done that as well, and none of us have any fear of or illusions about death and have already formulated our own exit strategies depending on circumstances. “Exit Strategy” is the name of Kelsey’s book about her relationship with an elderly woman she cared for through the end of her life.

The Wednesday before, six of us met at our monthly Girls Nite Out dinner at Los Agaves, by far Kelsey’s favorite restaurant. She picked me up because I had had a tooth pulled the day before and was still loopy from painkillers. She came in because she wanted to meet my two new cats, Cheech and Chong, who were finally coming out from under the bed to meet people. We talked about the animals that have gone through our lives.

At dinner she was Kelsey-as-usual, loud, vivacious, in-your-face, sometimes annoyingly so. She didn’t like the wine. She ordered her favorite meal — she ate nothing that had eyelashes! We talked about ... nothing, really.

When she dropped me off, we hugged, said I love you and see you soon. There was no indication that she had already made up her mind to carry out her exit strategy — but now I know, she had. Bon voyage, my friend.

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