

# Lawmakers' vote helps gay veterans

Jonathan J. Cooper/Sheila V Kumar  
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — Oregon is on track to be the first state to hire a coordinator to help lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender veterans upgrade a less-than-honorable discharge received because of their sexual orientation.

The bill was among a flurry of legislation approved as Oregon lawmakers wrapped up the five-month legislative session on Monday.

Other last-minute bills would help strippers report workplace violations and young people expunge marijuana convictions from their records. In a surprise move that frustrated marijuana farmers, lawmakers opted not to put a two-year delay on the cultivation of hemp, a non-intoxicating form of the cannabis plant.

If Gov. Kate Brown signs off, a new LGBT coordinator at the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs would help gay veterans apply for a change in their discharge status. Advocates say some gay and lesbian service members received less than honorable discharges because of their sexual orientation, barring them from receiving certain federal and state benefits, including those of the G.I. Bill.

Supporters said LGBT veterans have a disproportionate number of discharge appeals pending.

"I have personally served with folks who were discharged because of their orientation," said Rep. Paul Evans, a Democrat from Monmouth and retired Air Force major. "Only two things really matter: Are they serving as well as they possibly can? And are they doing everything they can while they're there to make a better and stronger society?" he added.

Basic Rights Oregon, a nonprofit gay and

transgender advocacy group based in Portland, said in submitted testimony that veterans were dismissed under the 1993 federal law Don't Ask Don't Tell, which allowed gays to serve as long as they kept their sexual orientation a secret. But veterans have also been discharged because of the sexual preferences dating back to World War II, they said, and all often need help navigating the red tape to get their discharge status changed.

Those critical of the measure said it shouldn't serve just a portion of the veteran population when all service members are in need of support. Rep. Mike McLane an Oregon Air National Guard officer and staff judge advocate, said veterans can be discharged for a whole range of reasons, stretching from smoking marijuana to adultery. There have been veterans discharged for behavior permissible in the civilian populace but not in the military, he added.

"Let's do it for all the veterans who have been discharged based upon a code of justice that we now look back and say it's wrong," said McLane, a Powell Butte Republican. "By opening the door and choosing one group,

we are in essence using public funding to favor one class of veterans over another class of veterans."

Brown, a Democrat who is the nation's first bisexual governor, does not weigh in on legislation before she signs it.

The Legislature also sent Brown a bill creating a hotline for strippers to report problems in clubs and seek work.

The bill was requested by a group of dancers who worked with the National Association of Social Workers. The dancers told lawmakers they like the work they do, but they sometimes feel like there's nowhere to turn for non-judgmental advice when their rights are violated.

"I have a lot of faith in individuals in this industry," said Elle Stanger, a dancer from Portland who was active in lobbying for the bill. "Most of us are very good people that work very hard to create a good working environment. It's a case of a few bad apples are the reason that we have to be so publicly proactive."

Another bill approved Monday would reduce the amount of time young people have to wait before

expunging marijuana crimes from their criminal record. The bill allows people under 21 to wait one year instead of three before petitioning to remove a conviction for possessing or delivering marijuana from their record.

The move comes as Oregon moves to begin selling marijuana through a regulated market, eliminating state sanctions for possession of the drug in limited quantities.

But one hot-button marijuana-related bill did not pass.

Lawmakers chose not to delay the development of a hemp industry, a measure that was seen as prioritizing marijuana ahead of hemp. Outdoor pot farmers said they fear hemp will pollinate their plants, diminishing the intoxicating effects and its value.

"Obviously the laws and regulations still need work around the coexistence of hemp and sensimilla," said Cedar Grey, president of the Oregon SunGrown Growers' Guild, representing outdoor marijuana growers in southwestern Oregon, a top outdoor marijuana growing area. Sensimilla is unfertilized, and highly potent, marijuana.

# Right-to-die advocates call Ca. loss a brief setback

By Renit Nirappil  
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Ca. (AP) — California dealt the national right-to-die movement a huge blow when legislation allowing doctors to prescribe life-ending drugs stalled, but advocates aren't conceding defeat.

The movement was reinvigorated by the nationally publicized story of Brittany Maynard, a 29-year-old California woman who moved to Oregon last fall to die on her own terms after a brain cancer diagnosis. She argued in widely viewed online videos that she should have been able to access life-ending drugs in her home state.

That wasn't enough to sway lawmakers on California's Assembly Health Committee ahead of a bill deadline, so the legislation's authors ended their efforts until next year.

Lawmakers and aid-indying advocates vowed they would continue to fight.

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## Agenda

Sisters City Council  
City Hall, 520 E. Cascade Ave.

- July 16, 8 a.m. workshop:
  1. Water/sewer infrastructure and rates.
  2. City Council application review.
  3. Preview July 23, workshop and regular meeting agenda.
  4. Other business — Business Owner Opinion Survey update.