

Busted?



Emerald photo

Senate committee holds bill to expand reach of police

By DANA TIMS
Of the Emerald

SALEM — Marijuana smokers who enjoy mixing driving and toking can breathe a little easier following Wednesday's tabling of Senate Bill 35; yet, the bill may still be reconsidered, which could lead to the lumping of everything from marijuana to NyQuil into Oregon's drunk driving law.

Ironically, the two liberals on the Senate transportation committee voted for the bill, saying that if someone is stopped while under the influence of marijuana or any other drug, he should be arrested.

The two conservatives, however, voted against the bill. They countered that tests for drugs other than alcohol are expensive and difficult to administer.

"This bill ties the DUI statute to NyQuil," explained Sen. Robert Smith, R-Burns, "and I'm not ready to arrest a person for that reason."

Smith also claimed that he doesn't equate marijuana with alcohol. The latter, he said, justifies harsher penalties.

Sen. Stephen Kafoury, D-Portland, took strong exception to Smith's position.

"We didn't give it the hearing it deserved," he commented. "We had reports from the state police dealing with fatal accidents that were related to drugs other than alcohol." He listed marijuana and prescription drugs as examples.

Kafoury said the absence of committee member Len Hannon, D-Medford, may mean the bill can be reconsidered.

"We just need a majority and with Hannon we'll have it," he speculated.

To ensure the necessary majority to bring the bill off the table, Kafoury is counting on support from chairer Del Isham, a liberal Democrat from Lincoln City. Isham, while favoring the bill's concept, empathizes with the views of Smith and Sen. L. B. Day, R-Salem, who motioned to table the bill following a

2-2 vote.

"I voted for the bill," says Isham, "because if someone is intoxicated, if their motor skills are impaired — regardless of the drug they're on — they should be off the road."

"However," he said, "this bill would necessitate a different test for each drug. One test is now available for marijuana, but it costs \$250 per test and tells only if someone has used marijuana in the past two or three days."

The bill was submitted by the Oregon Traffic Safety Commission on behalf of all state traffic enforcement agencies, according to Oregon State Police Captain Marvin Acheson. It has also received the support of many local district attorneys, although no group showed up to testify at the hearing.

"No one knows how many or which drugs would be added in the future," says Acheson, "but if this bill were passed, it would include marijuana, paint, glue, prescription drugs and over-the-counter drugs."

At Wednesday's hearing, psychotropic mushrooms were also nominated for notoriety.

"There would be trouble with implementation," noted Acheson. "For alcohol, you have the breathalyzer test. But other tests are either doubtful or nonexistent. You can't use their evidence in court."

One test is being developed in California, said Acheson, that would be extremely accurate but it would cost thousands of dollars to operate and would take weeks to return information.

No one, not even a marijuana smoker, is holding a breath in expectation of thousands of dollars being allocated to institute two roadside sobriety tests for pot. And transportation committee members agree that even if this bill dies, police can use existing statutes to detain intoxicated drivers.

Despite Kafoury's promise to revive SB 35 most committee members indicated the tabling action was tantamount to the bill's death, leaving untold thousands of NyQuil users free to terrorize the roads.

Nigerian students face cash crunch

By KELI OSBORN
Of the Emerald

Friday is the last day to register and pay tuition, and the deadline could mean one more problem for many of the University's Nigerian

students suffering from a months-old financial crisis.

Many of the Nigerian students attending colleges and universities throughout the country have not yet received the money they need to pay tuition, housing and

living expenses for this academic year.

Thirty Nigerian students attend the University, and all face financial troubles of one kind or another, according to Tom Mills, director of the University's International Student Services.

Six of the students attend on Nigerian government scholarships and have yet to pay fall term tuition. This is not usually a problem, he says, because the business office has a policy of giving students a no-interest loan if there is sufficient evidence that they will be able to repay it the following term.

But the students are still unable to obtain the needed funds from their government, and might not be allowed to register this term,

Mills says. The University's Foreign Student Loan Fund is currently overdrawn, he adds, so relief is not in sight.

Bureaucratic delays in issuing support checks is at the root of the problem for Nigerian government-sponsored students. The government has a balance of payments problem and wants to get the most favorable exchange rate possible, Mills says.

Privately sponsored Nigerian students are also having money woes, he adds. All money leaving the country must go through its central bank and is often tied up for months in red tape.

"Most foreign students tend to have similar problems. Distance is a cause...it is hard getting money from one place to another.

American students in foreign schools have the same trouble," Mills says.

Foreign students are in a kind of "Catch 22" situation, he says. They are required to attend school full-time while abroad, and must obtain permission from the U.S. Immigration Service to work off-campus. So students unable to get money from home face obstacles in finding jobs to keep them in school.

Mills emphasizes that the Nigerian students are in no way responsible for the current financial trouble. "It is not a reflection of the students themselves," he says.

Students still unable to pay tuition on Friday should visit the registrar's office to discuss the possibility of petitioning for a temporary waiver from the Academic Requirements Committee.

Mills says he hopes the problems are cleared away soon.

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