

Aged need 'bill of rights'

By DANA TIMS
Of the Emerald

SALEM — For the first time in recent memory, Rep. Wally Priestly, D-Portland, wore a tie. It had to be something big.

Priestly, who usually lives in a turtleneck sweater, and other members of the House aging committee heard their first bill Tuesday.

The aging committee has been slow to start hearings on bills because of the massive amount of information compiled on nursing homes during the legislative interim. Now, with preliminary review sessions completed, the committee should get its share of the attention and the controversy.

The first bill before the committee would establish a bill of rights for nursing home patients. HB 2368 is aimed primarily at guaranteeing the privacy and dignity of patients often unable to protect themselves.

"The rights of nursing home patients are severely hampered," testified Doug Rogers, a member of the interim task force on nursing homes. "There is a strong need to make the elderly educated consumers of the services available

to them."

Rogers also told the committee that if people spent as much time looking for an adequate nursing home as they do searching for a new car, "it would be a much better world out there."

A bill of rights for nursing home patients is needed because of the "overwhelming impact" of being institutionalized," Rogers said.

"A loss of health, economic power, residence and all matters of choice experienced by seniors put in a nursing home is only surpassed by being confined to the state hospital in Salem and the penitentiary."

The bill, co-sponsored by 14 legislators on behalf of United Seniors '79, is before the committee because abuses have occurred in the past, contended Rogers.

"If there hadn't been problems," he said, "we wouldn't need this bill."

Rights are one thing, the initial questions from committee members implied. "But how much will it cost?" asked Max Rijken, D-Newport.

Previous estimates, although not presented at the hearing, have forecast a budget of \$40,000 to

\$50,000 for the next biennium to enforce patients' rights under HB 2368. These funds would pay for a hearings officer to travel to the nursing home in question, meet with both the patient and administrator and make a decision. The cost of each visit would be about \$300.

Rights contained in the bill, drawn largely from federal regulations regarding nursing home care, include: freedom from mental and physical abuse, the right to associate with any person, the right to file grievances and to participate in policy decisions, freedom to manage personal financial affairs and the right to privacy for visits from spouse or friends.

"This simply gives patients the leverage of a bargaining tool," Rogers explained. Presently, he said, federal regulations designate the administrator of a nursing home as the referee in a dispute, which might involve only the administrator and a complaining patient.

Nursing homes are a relatively new concept in American society, Rogers stated. He compared them with public utilities because of the lack of choice facing prospective patients.

kevin harden

political rhetoric

Reforestation must not be as important to Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., as he tries to make it sound.

Packwood, whom the rumor mill says is politically vulnerable, told fellow Republicans last week he was concerned enough about poor reforestation efforts to introduce legislation into the Senate to correct the problem.

His bill, S. 100, would eventually pay for 100 percent reforestation of all timber land around the nation, Packwood said. However, that may not be the case.

Rep. Jim Weaver D-Ore., chairer of the House forestry subcommittee, said Friday Packwood couldn't be serious about the bill because he hasn't contacted him yet to push for the bill's passage in the House of Representatives.

If the bill is to succeed, Weaver said, it must first be approved by his committee. It will then go to the House and, with Rep. Al Ullman's, D-Ore., support, it could become law.

But, Weaver complained, Packwood hasn't bothered to say a word to him about the bill. That could be easily explained, Packwood countered during his speech, because the measure doesn't require the forestry committee's endorsement. It will be sent

straight to the House Ways and Means Committee and bypass the whole tedious process.

If that's a bit hard to swallow, try figuring how Packwood is going to get approval to spend nearly \$120 million in a tax revolt Congress without some sort of committee approval.

Speaking of the rumor mill and Bob Packwood, there seems to be trouble afoot in the Congressional race for Packwood's Senate seat. Jim Weaver may be looking into the possibility of trading his representative stripes for a Senate seat.

Weaver, however, denied that he wants to do anything more than serve the Fourth Congressional District, and then see what happens.

At a speech in Medford last week Weaver took a jab at Packwood, saying he didn't want to see the GOP senator spend another six years in Congress. Friday, however, Weaver apologized for that remark and said he didn't mean anything by it.

If that weren't bad enough, the rumor mill now has it that Portland Mayor Neil Goldschmidt has found his cure for Senate fever: Packwood's vulnerability. Goldschmidt has been eyeing the senate for some time, Portland sources say, and 1980 just might be his chance.

Senate approves new compensation boss

SALEM (AP) — Roy Green was confirmed Tuesday as head of the Oregon Workers' Compensation Department after an hour-long Senate debate over his 25,250 shares of insurance company stock.

Five senators rose to speak against Green, claiming that ownership of the Employees Benefit Co. stock was a conflict of interest because the company is the largest private carrier of workers' compensation in Oregon.

However, other senators cited Green's promise to get rid of the stock by next fall and the confirmation went through 19-10 with one senator absent.

Sen. Dick Groener, D-Milwaukie, called Green a "cost conscious but compassionate" man and praised his handling of the department.

Sen. Walt Brown, D-Lake Oswego, said the issue was not whether Green had acted improperly, but whether a situation existed where he could influence the profits of a company in which he holds stock.

"When the director of our Workers' Compensation Department has over a half million dollars in holdings in the insurance company which writes the largest amount of workers compensation insurance in the state . . . there is at least an appearance that profits of that company will be in his mind," said Brown.

Green, 62, was a founder of Employee Benefits Insurance Co. and was a senior vice president when he left the company in April 1976. When he was appointed to the Workers' Compensation Department in September 1977 by former Gov. Bob Straub, he promised to get rid of his 30,500 shares of stock within two years.

He told the Senate Labor Committee last week that he had divested himself of 5,250 shares so far, but had been inhibited from getting rid of the rest by Securities and Exchange Commission rules.

Senators opposing the appointment said that Green's stock had almost doubled in value since he took office, but Sen. Ted Kulongoski explained the increase was due to the company going public.

Kulongoski, D-Junction City, said he had questioned Green extensively about his holdings when the nominee appeared before the Labor Committee and was satisfied he was the most qualified person for the job.

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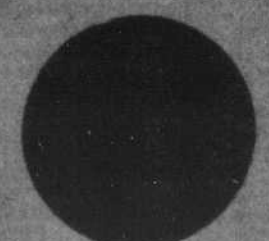
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