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TODAY



House bill would restrain police newsroom access

By DANA TIMS
Of the Emerald

SALEM — Walter Cronkite is finally getting somewhere. His words have fueled what David Frohnmayer, Rep-Eugene, calls a "firestorm of criticism" over newsroom searches by police.

That criticism resulted in passage of a bill Thursday that bans such searches and seizures in Oregon. House bill 2418, sponsored by Frohnmayer, passed by a 57-0 vote. It now goes to the Senate.

"Even Walter Cronkite, whom we think of as a grandfather figure, has spoken recently on what he calls a dangerous erosion of freedom of the press," Frohnmayer said. Illegal searches are at the heart of that erosion, he added.

Portions of the bill that limit the power of judges to issue search warrants authorizing the rifling of newsroom files are amendments to the Oregon shield law, passed by the 1973 Legislature.

"The shield law has worked well," Frohnmayer stated. "It provides the needed security for gatherers of information to do their job. There have been no abuses of the shield law or illegal searches in Oregon." But he termed the legislation "preventative medicine."

"For 195 years there were no searches of newsrooms at all in this country," Frohnmayer noted. "But since 1971 there have been at least 15 — and 10 of those have taken place in California."

The bill is a response to the recent Stanford

Daily decision, according to Frohnmayer. In that case, a judge ruled that police acted properly in spending some eight hours rummaging through newsroom files of the Stanford Daily armed with only a warrant. Had he decided a subpoena was necessary, a hearing would have to be held to determine the relevancy of the materials being sought by a district attorney.

The year-long search for Patty Hearst also prompted numerous searches of news media premises in California, he said.

Under Frohnmayer's bill, a prosecutor seeking evidence of crime from news media personnel would be required to serve investigative subpoenas to those persons. The party served with such an order could then seek a time delay, modification or dismissal of the subpoena.

"The news media must be as free as possible," Frohnmayer continued. "Restrictions would mean that vital sources would dry up and the threat of physical disruption would always be present."

He reminded his colleagues that if the press weren't free to pursue all sources, even anonymous ones, Richard Nixon's "Deep Throat" might never have offered information to the Washington Post.

"And I don't need to elaborate on the ramifications of that," he said.

If the bill passes the senate — where Frohnmayer claims it has solid support — and is signed by the governor, it could be superceded only if it conflicted with another constitutional issue, such as a defendant's right to a fair trial under the 14th Amendment.

kevin harden

political rhetoric

Eugene Attorney Charles Porter has fired the first shot in what may prove to be a long and difficult battle to unseat Republican Sen. Bob Packwood Monday during the regular Demo Forum luncheon.

Porter, a former Fourth Congressional District representative and a burr under the saddle of inept politicians, announced plans to form a committee to support "Packwood's Democratic successor."

The idea is good, but the possibilities are anything but promising right now. Packwood, although a politician of questionable quality, has become entrenched in the I'm-in-Washington-doing-my-job-and-you're-not cycle and has built a record — no matter what kind of record — to fall back on. Voters like records.

Incumbents are difficult to unseat, especially if they're GOP members from Oregon. For some reason, the Republican candidates have been rolling over Democratic opponents for the Senate while the Democrats seem content with the House of Representatives.

I'm certain Democratic Party chairer Jim Klonoski would agree that whoever tries to unseat Packwood should have the gumption of Wayne Morse, the persistence of Adlai Stevenson, the patience of Bob Straub and the cunning

of Jim Weaver. Oops, how did that name get in that list?

Free Speech isn't dead. It is just mortally wounded. The conviction of Cynthia Kokis last week for trespassing on Valley River Center's property after she was told to take her political conscience and leave has struck a blow to freedom of speech versus property rights.

Kokis, who did not regret her action, came face to face with the ugly reality that when it comes to free speech or big bucks, the dollars win, hands down.

Kokis' crime was not calling for the boycott of a company that has shown irresponsibility toward the nutrition of Third World infants, but crossing the barrier into "private property land."

If, as it has been argued, the shopping malls of today are the town squares of yesterday, then the idea of voicing one's views before any who would listen is gasping for breath.

By owning the malls, the organizations who run them also own the ideas and the speech that circulates inside of them. Conformity is the rule and non-conformity is slapped with a large fine.

With shopping malls popping up faster than dandelions, the ideal of open and free speech could be plowed under.

Senate confirms Jackson

SALEM (AP) — Glenn Jackson, the architect of Oregon's highway system was confirmed Thursday by a Senate committee to a seat on the state Economic Development Commission.

The 76-year-old Medford executive has agreed to resign as chairer of the state Transportation Commission when the full Senate confirms him to his new post.

"The problem we're facing today is the fact that we aspire to the preservation of the environment, which is good, but we may have to take a second look to give the economic environment equal consideration," Jackson said in an interview after the Senate Trade and Economic Development Committee voted to confirm him.

The committee asked few questions of Jackson and approved him without debate.

"There is an element of society that feels environmental impact statements haven't given due consideration to economic impacts," he added.

Jackson said it was too early to discuss specific proposals he may have in the area of economic development, but said he wants better coordination of the commission's activities with local, state and federal government.

He said he was concerned by the extent of government regulation and wants to make sure that industry already here is given a chance to expand before an effort is made to attract foreign business.

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