

Bill proposes legislature by lottery

By DANA TIMS
Of the Emerald

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature would meet monthly and half its members would eventually be chosen by lot, if a Eugene state senator's proposals are referred out of committee and given voter approval.

Gov. Vic Atiyeh, however, doesn't like at least one of Sen. George Wingard's measures, claiming monthly meetings constitute a full-time legislature, something he says he's always opposed.

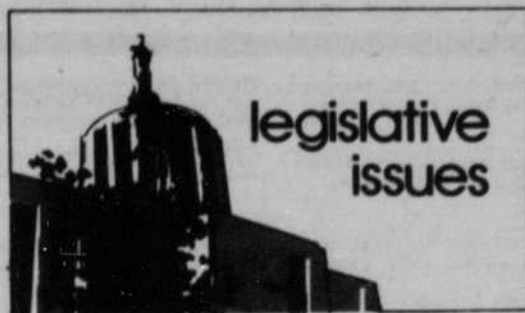
Senate Joint Resolution 11, the monthly meeting bill, and SJR 17, the lottery proposal, were both introduced by Republican Wingard.

Their provisions are among the most radical presented this session. And, according to another senator, among the most likely to fail.

Both measures would amend the state Constitution, which requires the voters' stamp of approval.

"I used to spend only one day a month on legislative business during the interim," Wingard said in support of SJR 11 at a hearing Tuesday before the Senate State and Federal Affairs Committee. "Now I put in at least three days and I'm sure the leaders spend a week per month."

The time demands placed on legislators exclude most citizens from seeking office, Wingard said. And the current six-month sessions are even more exclusive than the interim requirements, he added.



"In a few years we'll be a professional legislature," Wingard predicted. "But with the provisions of SJR 11, at least we'll have to go home on weekends and deal with the real world — whether we like it or not."

Wingard said the change would also speed up the confirmation process, eliminate the Emergency Board's role in allocating millions from the general fund during the interim and remove the possibility of bills not being considered due to pileups at the end of the session.

In a morning "media availability," Atiyeh told reporters he's always been against a full-time legislature. Monthly sessions would amount to that, he said, "and there's too much of that already."

Wingard sponsored similar measures in two previous sessions, neither escaping committee.

SJR 17, also considered Tuesday, establishes the procedure for selecting half the senators and representatives by lot.

A voter, when signing the registration book at a polling place, would have the option of checking a box indicating

preference for legislative service.

Half the state's representatives would then be elected and half would be chosen randomly from those who "enlisted."

The proposal also would apportion the state into 30 representative districts and 15 senatorial districts. Currently there are 60 and 30, respectively. Each of the combined districts would have one elected and one selected representative.

Wingard compared the idea to the jury system and said, "It concerns me why people run for the Legislature. But when people are called or forced to do something in this country they rise to the occasion."

He predicted that soon, half the members of the Legislature will be listing themselves as full-time politicians.

"In light of that kind of professionalism, I'm hopeful this bill will restore the role of the citizen in the Legislature," Wingard commented.

Sen. Jan Wyers, D-Portland, asked Wingard how provisions of the bill would go into effect.

"On a staggered basis," Wingard answered. "As a member retires, that seat will be filled by someone chosen by lottery rather than election, until half the seats are filled by each method."

"I just wondered," Wyers responded. "I'm not arguing very hard for this bill because it doesn't have a chance."

But Wingard remained undaunted, saying he's confident at least one of the measures, SJR 17, has "a good chance."

A work session on the bills will be scheduled later by the committee.

PGE reassures panel of nuclear safety

By GREG WASSON
Of the Emerald

SALEM — Last month, responding to questions about storage of nuclear wastes, Doug Heider, chief lobbyist for Portland General Electric, assured the House Environment and Energy Committee that it was not a question of developing a safe method for storing nuclear waste, but one of choosing which of the many methods to adopt.

Tuesday, PGE's expert on atomic storage, Washington D.C. lawyer and former member of Congress, Orval Hansen, was less emphatic.

"I would not make the flat statement that the technology exists," testified Hansen at a hearing scheduled by the House committee. "It's a dynamic thing. It's evolving. It's changing. As with anything else, we do things better each year."

Hansen said he is "confident" we can store wastes safely now but said the policies

endorsed by Pres. Carter make the task much more difficult.

According to Hansen, Carter has stopped the separation of fissionable material from spent fuel because once separated, the active substances can be used for nuclear weapons.

"The preferred way, in my judgement, is to separate the highly radioactive wastes, to concentrate it and solidify it, then to place that in any number of geological media. Salt appears to be one of the best because of its stability."

Hansen then talked about the widespread misconceptions that waste will be dangerous for centuries.

"While you talk about radioactivity over a period of thousands of years, within 500 to a thousand years the decay levels are way below the levels that existed in the original ore."

Hansen was asked by a member of the committee why the nation should gamble that permanent waste storage will work.

"My personal view," responded Hansen, "is that in terms of the health and environmental effects, the alternatives are more costly."

He then cited problems with oil plants.

According to Rep. Nancie Fadeley, D-Eugene, Tuesday's was the last hearing the committee will hold on HB 2570, a bill that prohibits licensing of further nuclear plants until waste storage facilities are built and are operating.

Earlier in the day, Gov. Vic Atiyeh's second choice to head the Department of Energy was approved by the Senate Environment and Energy Committee. The appointee, Lynn Frank, must still get the nod from the full Senate.

The 28-year-old Frank, a budget analyst for the Executive Department, describes himself as an administrator.

The committee also recom-

mended confirmation of Portland Attorney Walt Evans to the Energy Facilities Siting Council. Evans says he has an open mind about nuclear power.

"I have serious concerns about it and have had for some time, particularly with the Three Mile Island incident. But I'm frank to confess that if I turn the light switch up, I would like to see the electric light go on. If I open up the refrigerator, I'd like to know that the food was not spoiled."

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