

# Legislature confronts moral issues

SALEM (AP) — Should lawmakers decide whether a person may have an abortion, smoke marijuana or pray in school?

"We are, after all, politicians," says Rep. Ted Bugas, R-Astoria. "We have to reflect to some degree social attitudes, but there's a limit to this. We can't in general legislate morality but we can try to give guidelines and signals."

The signal the 1981 Legislature may send Oregonians is one of inaction on controversial social issues. Lawmakers this session face enough possible debits for making budget cuts without seeking more heat by

voting on abortion and gay rights.

House Minority Leader Paul Hanneman says even moves toward more conservative stances may be hard to sell.

"It's better for the state to stay out of such issues entirely," says Hanneman, R-Cloverdale. "We tend to create more problems than we solve... People believe that government has bungled it to a good extent already."

Some of the moral issues gathering dust in the 1981 Legislature include:

—Abortion. There are several bills introduced at the request of Oregon Right to Life. The most controversial (SB364) would

ban state funding for abortion except to save the life of the mother. The measure has been assigned to the budget-writing Joint Ways and Means Committee, but no hearing has been scheduled.

—Gay Rights. Rep. Gretchen Kafoury, D-Portland, has sponsored bills to ban discrimination against homosexuals in housing and employment (HB2702, HB2703, HB2704). Hearings have not been held on any of the proposals and similar bills in past sessions failed.

—Marijuana. The House Judiciary Committee has been working on bills that would allow Oregonians to grow three plants of marijuana at home and would

ban the sale of drug paraphernalia (HB2422). The panel has killed the legalization proposal and has greatly modified the proposed paraphernalia ban.

—Prayer. A House resolution (HJR14) would ask voters to amend the constitution to allow Christmas nativity scenes in public schools and permit voluntary prayers in schools. The House Education Committee has not held a hearing.

The Legislature also faces decisions on gambling, alcohol, cigarettes, seat belts, sexual education and the teaching of the creation theory of life.

"It is government's role when appropriate to set policy, but there are many areas of privacy

that government should keep out of," says Ms. Kafoury. "Abortion is a private medical decision the state has no business being involved in at all. I don't support bills that in any way restrict access to a medical procedure."

However, she thinks the state should adopt a policy opposing discrimination against homosexuals.

"Unfortunately, people with certain beliefs have attempted to force that belief on everyone and it's become necessary for the Legislature to deal with it," says Sen. Tony Meeker, R-Amity. "The abortion issue is one in which people wish to defend their right not to pay taxes for abortions."

Meeker, a member of the Ways and Means Committee, said he would try his best to get the panel to hear the abortion funding ban, although he thinks its chances of getting out of committee are 50-50 at best.

"The flip liberal answer is that the Legislature should not be involved in morality and lifestyle," says Rep. Tom Mason, D-Portland. "No one is more guilty of involving themselves in people's lifestyles than liberals, but we call it helping the oppressed."

## Natural gas search in Oregon continues

SALEM (AP) — Applications to drill seven more wells in Western Oregon in search of natural gas are on file with the state Department of Geology and Mineral Industries.

More applications for drilling are expected now that warmer and drier weather has arrived, says Dennis Olmstead, the department's petroleum geologist.

The Oregon Journal newspaper in Portland said industry sources have claimed a shortage of drilling rigs caused by

heavy demand in California and the Rocky Mountain area has held up drilling in Oregon.

Oregon's second gas field was discovered earlier this year near Lebanon in Linn County by American Quasar Petroleum.

The largest gas field, discovered two years ago, is at Mist in Columbia County.

American Quasar plans to drill a 5,000-foot well near Jefferson in Marion County and another 5,000-foot well near Fayetteville in Linn County.

Reichhold Energy Corp.,

operator of the Mist field, plans to drill an 8,000-foot well to explore for gas under the Mist field, which is 3,000 feet below the surface.

Reichhold also plans to drill exploration wells near Salem and Woodburn.

Diamond Shamrock Corp., which is drilling in Clatsop County south of Knappa, has permits for two more wells.

Buzz Ehrens of Ehrens Petroleum Co. of Salem says he will apply for a permit to drill near Garibaldi in Tillamook

County.

He also plans to finish two wells south of Depoe Bay where drilling was suspended during the winter.

One of those wells was the source of a mistaken claim that oil had been found. The oil turned out to be soft coal.

Olmstead said the Texaco Corp. drilled a well near Redmond in Central Oregon and recently capped it with concrete after failing to find oil or gas.

## Spiro Agnew on trial for bribery charges

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Trial begins this week in a suit seeking to force former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew to pay Maryland \$200,000 he allegedly received in bribes when he was governor.

Circuit Court Judge Bruce C. Williams last month denied a motion by the state seeking an immediate judgment against Agnew, saying there is "a need for testimony in the case."

The suit was initially brought in 1976 by three Montgomery County taxpayers, who claimed that Agnew should be required to reimburse the state for money allegedly received in bribes. The attorney general's office later joined the suit on behalf of the state.

Agnew, who lives in Rancho Mirage, Calif., is not expected to be present for the trial, which begins Tuesday.

The suit evolved from the federal charges brought against Agnew in 1973 when he was vice president under then-Pres. Richard M. Nixon.

Federal prosecutors charged

at that time that Agnew received the money through an alleged kickback scheme.

When he resigned as vice president on Oct. 10, 1973, Agnew pleaded no contest to federal income tax evasion charges. But he has denied accepting any bribes.

Four men told prosecutors in 1973 that they received funds from engineers and contractors and funneled the money to Agnew, who then was governor of Maryland.

The admissions were made in sworn statements during the investigation which led to Agnew's resignation.

One of the men, I.H. "Bud" Hammerman, was a close associate of Agnew at the time. Hammerman has agreed to pay to the state treasury \$30,000 which he said he received from the alleged scheme.

The state is trying to collect \$120,000 from Jerome Wolff, who was chairman of the State Roads Commission under Agnew, for his involvement in the alleged kickback scheme.

## L.A. busing sidelined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist on Sunday refused to order mandatory busing for integration in Los Angeles public schools. The action means mandatory busing will end Monday in the nation's second-largest school district.

However, Rehnquist said he will wait until he hears from the city's school board before making a final decision on an NAACP emergency request to keep busing alive by setting aside a lower court ruling.

The justice asked the Los Angeles school board to file a response to the emergency request by the close of business Wednesday.

A federal appeals panel cleared the way Saturday for previously bused students to return to neighborhood schools by overturning a federal judge's ruling that would have required officials to keep the busing plan operating.

The 17-page petition filed by the NAACP with Rehnquist in Washington, D.C., asked him to discard the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling and to reinstate the district court order.

Joseph Duff, attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Los Angeles, had said he was not overly optimistic that Rehnquist would decide in the NAACP's favor.

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