

Legislative update

House unanimously passes speed limit bill

By B.J. Thomsen
Of the Emerald

House Bill 3147, which would eliminate the current 55 mph speed limit, was unanimously passed out of the House last week and now moves to the Senate.

The bill faces a difficult journey through the Senate, according to Sen. Jane Cease, D-Portland. Cease is chairwoman of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Although Cease does not support raising the speed limit, she said the bill would have a better chance of passing the Senate if the seat belt bill, Senate Bill 87, is passed.

Sen. Grattan Kerans, D-Eugene, said he would like to see SB 87 and HB 3147 tied together in a legislative package.

SB 87 was defeated in the House and currently is being reconsidered in the House Human Resources Committee.

The House last week also passed a bill that would create a formal statewide ban on classified research at institutions under jurisdiction of the State Board of Higher Education. The bill would disallow any research the results of which cannot be published.

Rep. Wayne Fawbush, D-Hood River, the carrier of the bill, said he is confident the bill will get Senate approval and be signed by the governor.

At an Oregon State Public Interest Research Group press conference Thursday morning on the steps of the Capitol, Joan Claybrook, the president of Public Citizens, spoke in favor of leaving the tort legal system intact.

Claybrook, who worked for consumer advocate Ralph Nader for seven years and was administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration under President Carter, said changing the tort system will not lower insurance rates and that putting a cap on insurance rates is "meat ax" legislation.

The Legislature has been wrestling with the tort reform issue for most of the session, and a bill dealing with the issue, Senate Bill 323, is now before a House committee. A related bill, Senate Bill 325, dealing with court procedures, was rejected by the Senate last week.

The lemon law bill, House Bill 2599, is currently before a

Senate committee, according to Rep. Peg Jolin, D-Cottage Grove. Jolin said she is confident the bill will come out of the Senate committee in the next week or two relatively unchanged. The bill, if passed, would require automakers losing a court decision involving a consumer complaint to pay triple damages awarded the consumer.

A bill modifying Oregon's worker compensation law was passed out of the House Labor Committee last week on a 7-2 vote. The bill is designed to help relieve the exorbitant cost of worker's compensation insurance in the state and would allow insurers and employers to settle claims among themselves. Currently the state steps in to settle claims.

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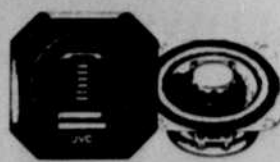


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