

# House passes bill allowing fines in misdemeanor cases

By B.J. Thomsen

Of the Emerald

A bill that would help to streamline the "broken legal system" in the State of Oregon passed the House Thursday on a 40-19 vote. Reps. Jolin, Campbell and Dwyer were the only "no" votes from Lane County.

The bill, HB 2384, would allow district attorneys to decide whether a misdemeanor offense should be dealt with as such or should be treated as merely a violation similar to a traffic violation, according to Rep. David Dix, D-Eugene, who is a co-sponsor of the legislation.

not afford one, even if all the attorney does is tell the defendant that the court is not going to prosecute.

Presently no fines can be imposed on offenders committing a misdemeanor.

Doug Harclerod, the Lane County district attorney, was not available for comment on the bill.

In other business, the mandatory seat belt bill was tripped

up on the floor of the Senate Thursday when on a vote of 20-10 the Senate decided not to concur with House amendments to the bill. The bill will now go to a joint conference committee.

Senate President John Kitzhaber, D-Roseburg, appointed Sens. Cease, Monroe and Simmons as senate conferees to represent the senate in the conference committee.

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If a district attorney determines that an offense is not serious enough to be dealt with as a misdemeanor, the bill would then allow a fee to be imposed.

Because the bill would allow fines to be imposed where none are allowed at present, the bill could save as much as \$200 per case, according to Dix.

A total figure for estimated savings was not available.

Serious misdemeanors would still be dealt with as they are under current law, Dix said.

"This is a serious effort by this administration and this legislative body to fix a broken legal system," Dix said.

Currently in misdemeanor cases an attorney must be appointed to defendants who can-

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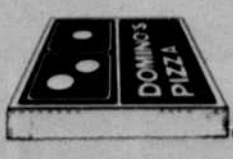
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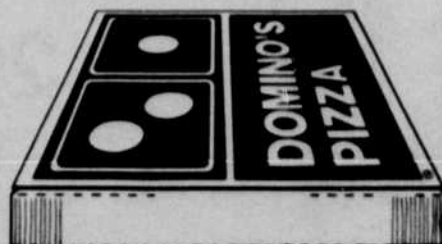
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