

Consumer protection bills proposed

By Rene DeCair
Emerald Reporter

SALEM — A state Senate committee heard public testimony Thursday on two bills that would attempt to protect consumers from misleading ad-



vertising claims and warn them of unsafe produce.

The Committee on Telecommunications and Consumer Affairs listened to public comment on two bill proposals initiated by the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group: Senate Bill 554 would impose labeling requirements on bottled water while Senate Bill

558 would require grocers to mark produce not grown in the United States with a label of its country of origin.

According to Jon Stubenvoll, OSPIR's consumer advocate, bottled water manufacturers get away with using words "as promotional gimmicks to get consumers' money" because there are no restrictions on the labels.

Stubenvoll said drinks can proclaim to be "mineral water" or "spring water," but do not have to contain spring water. Because all water has some minerals in it, any water — even if it was just tap water — could make the claim that it is "mineral" water, he said.

"There have to be standards to assure consumers that these terms mean something," he said, adding that in 1989 Americans spent more than \$2 billion for bottled water in the



Peg Jolin

"super trend of the '80s." Sen. Bob Shoemaker said that if the water is not harmful, or is just bought as part of a fad, then "the government

Turn to BILLS, Page 12

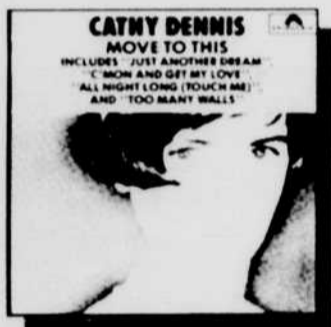


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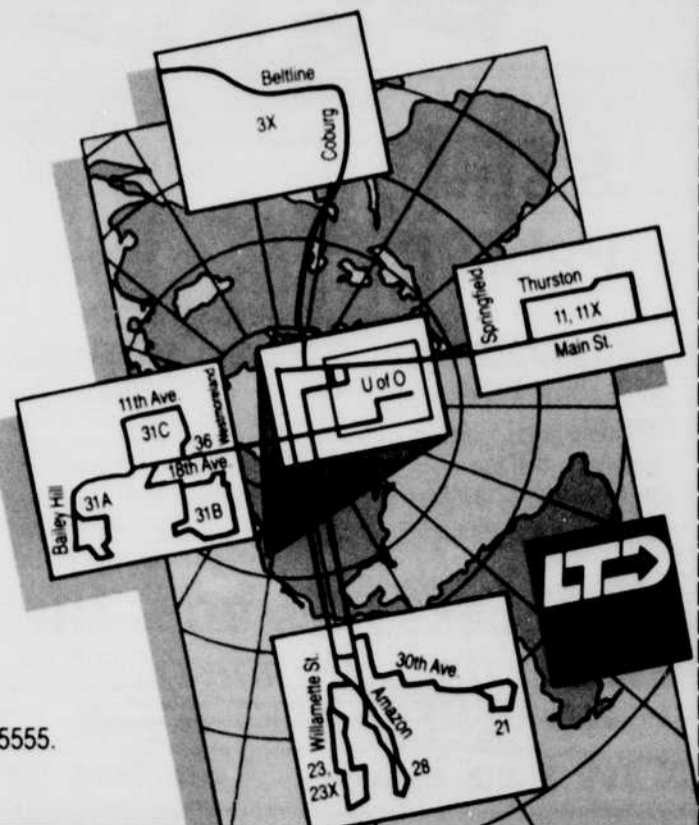
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