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Victims want overpass screens



NORTHWEST

SALEM (AP) — Two motorists, who were severely injured by rocks thrown off freeway overpasses, urged lawmakers Monday to speed safety screening of the over-

head crossings. "What are we waiting for? Some innocent victim to be decapitated?" Zelda Suniga of Salem asked the House Transportation Subcommittee.

Suniga was seriously hurt in September 1988 when a 61-pound rock dropped from an Interstate 5 overpass between Salem and Woodburn crashed through a car window onto her chest and face.

Suniga's husband, Frank, was driving the car. He said his wife would have been decapitated if the huge rock had landed slightly differently.

"I ask your help in protecting our travelers from what really are attempts to murder or seriously injure," he told the committee.

Zelda Suniga told legislators police reports show 100 to 125 objects are thrown off of overpasses each year.

Also testifying was Jessica Allen of Vancouver, Wash., whose face was smashed in 1985 by a 7-pound rock thrown from an I-5 overpass north of Albany onto her family's pickup truck.

Allen, now 20, said she was angered to later read police reports that showed there had been a dozen other incidents of objects tossed from overpasses

in the area.

Her father, Terrence Allen, said the screening program needs to be accelerated.

"It is my hope it will not take a death to be the catalyst," he said.

Zelda Suniga said both incidents changed the courses of the victims' lives.

"We will never fully recover," she said.

A bill introduced at Frank Suniga's request, HB2507, requires the state Transportation Department to install screens on all new overpasses and on at least 10 existing overpasses each year.

Suniga said the agency decided to erect 12 overpass screens a year after the Allen incident. But only one had been installed by the time of his wife's injuries three years later, he said.

Dwayne Hofstetter, safety engineer for the state Highway Division, said the Transportation Commission later had scaled back the timetable so screens are installed on four to six overpasses a year.

He said the work on each overpass costs close to \$30,000 and there are almost 400 overpasses in the state.

The measure also was endorsed by representatives of the Teamsters Union and the Oregon Trucking Association.

Rep. Chuck Norris, D-Hermiston, the subcommittee chairman, said he will schedule another hearing on the measure.

Lawyer says Packwood didn't identify sponsors

PORTLAND (AP) — A lawyer filed a complaint Monday against Sen. Bob Packwood, claiming the Oregon Republican failed to properly identify campaign contributors.

Keith D. Skelton said the complaint he sent to the Senate Ethics Commission alleges Packwood violated Senate rules by failing to follow federal elections law.

Skelton cited a story that appeared in *The Sunday Oregonian* saying Packwood's reports to the Federal Election Commission did not identify the occupations of more than half the individual contributors who gave him \$200 or more.

The senator's disclosure statements from 1991 through election day 1992 indicate Packwood was unable to determine what prominent people such as Grammy winner Quincy Jones or former Time-Warner Inc. chairman Steven J. Ross did for a living.

Elaine Franklin, Packwood's chief of staff, said Monday that the disclosure forms were filed by an accountant who may not know the occupations of the contributors.

Contributors who don't identify themselves receive a letter asking for the information, but they don't always provide it, she said.

Franklin added that Packwood's campaign requests the information for all contributions of \$100 or more, even though it is required only for those greater than \$200.

"We've gone to great lengths to make sure we comply with election law," she said.

Skelton, however, blamed Packwood.

"The law requires that candidates make their 'best efforts' to identify contributors," Skelton said. "In Packwood's case, even some of his close friends and associates were not so identified."

Skelton also argued in his complaint that Packwood "has deliberately, habitually and knowingly broken the federal elections law regarding complete filing of information" about campaign contributors.

The Sunday Oregonian reported that Republican Sen. Mark Hatfield, Packwood's colleague from Oregon, identified 83 percent of his contributors during his 1990 Senate race, about average for Congress.

Skelton is the husband of Betty Roberts, a former state Supreme Court justice who ran unsuccessfully against Packwood in 1974.

Sixth-grader raises funds for homeless

CORVALLIS (AP) — A mother trying to help her 10-year-old son stop staying up past his bedtime started the sixth-grader on a fund-raising drive that will feed a trio of homeless people for a month.

Jade Pietz said he was pestering his mom one night, saying he couldn't sleep because "I wanted to give money to the homeless."

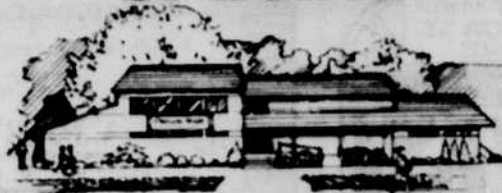
His mother, Jean, laughed when she recalled the episode.

"I didn't want to discourage him, but I thought, 'Boy, are you really pushing your bedtime,'" she said. "He does this a lot — stall tactics."

Instead of telling him to go back to bed, she suggested he think of ways to raise the money. Using a night light in his closet, Jade drew up a list of possibilities.

After considering car washes and can collections, he decided on organizing an art sale at Mountain View Elementary School. His fellow students donated the art, which raised \$106.35.

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