

Oil price-fixing suit settled; Oregon gets \$8 million

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California, Washington, Oregon and Arizona and their lawyers will share \$140 million from oil companies in the settlement of a price-fixing suit approved by a federal judge.

U.S. District Judge A. Wallace Tashima granted the states' request Tuesday to approve distribution of the money to programs related to transportation and energy use. The judge had previously accepted the states' argument that offering small

refunds to millions of gasoline buyers would be impractical.

The suit, filed in 1977, accused major oil companies of conspiring to fix the prices of gasoline and other oil products and of contriving a shortage of gasoline in the early 1970s to justify raising prices.

The settlement accepted by seven companies contained no finding of wrongdoing. The companies involved are Chevron, Mobil, Shell, ARCO, Unocal, Texaco and Exxon.

California, which was allocated \$81 million, will use it for earthquake safety reinforcement and repairs of bridges and highway overpasses, said Deputy Attorney General Thomas Greene. He said \$4.6 million has been set aside for the Golden Gate Bridge and the rest will be shared among various projects around the state.

"We were trying to provide a benefit to motorists, people who bought gasoline," Greene said. "This seemed to be a fairly focused and efficient way to do it."

Oregon also plans to use most of its \$8 million share for transportation projects. About \$7 million will be allotted in grants for such programs as transportation of the elderly and school children, drug and alcohol education, smog reduction, road repair and public transit, said Attorney General Ted Kulongoski.

The remainder of the settlement, about \$30 million, is to be divided among public and private lawyers representing the states.

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Packwood claims poll results ignored

ROSEBURG (AP) — Sen. Bob Packwood says he's paying little attention to a new poll suggesting his standing with Oregon voters has improved.

"If you live or die by the polls, you're going to die a thousand deaths before you're out of this business," Packwood said Tuesday during a visit to *The News-Review* newspaper.

As a Senate Ethics Committee investigation of Packwood nears its second year, 47 percent of those polled said the Oregon Republican should resign and 48 percent said he shouldn't. By comparison, 62 percent urged him to quit in a poll taken last February.

The new poll was conducted by Davis and Hibbits, Inc. of Portland for *The Oregonian* and KATU-TV and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

The Senate Ethics Committee has been probing allegations Packwood made improper sexual advances to women and tried to get lobbyists to hire his ex-wife so his alimony payments would go down. No date has been set for a hearing on the allegations.

Packwood said poll results showing only 25 percent would probably support him if he runs for the Senate again are too early to be significant.

"I don't run until 1998," he said. "Anybody who looks at the polls a year out, let alone four years out, and says, 'Well, that's it, that's what the polls say,' is more likely fooling themselves."

Though Packwood's current visit to his home state hasn't attracted the crowds of reporters and protesters that previous visits have, the senator said he still doesn't have the issue behind him.

"It will not be over until the ethics committee is done, and I don't know when that will be," he said.

Packwood also toured the Roseburg Forest Products Co. mill and had a question-and-answer session with workers. None of the workers brought up the sexual misconduct investigation.

Packwood did address a wide range of other subjects, including the U.S. military presence in Haiti.

"I don't understand why we're there," he said. "If the standard is anytime you don't like someone's government, you send in troops to change it, there are a number of countries that come to mind. And Cuba would be on top of the list."

He also predicted that President Clinton would become so fed up with the threat of lawsuits over his Northwest forest plan that, by next year, he would opt for language that would make the plan immune from future legal challenges.

Packwood said that if the Nov. 8 election were held today, Republicans would gain control of the Senate.

But he noted that many races where polls show Republicans in the lead normally tend to tighten as election day nears.

Deer overrun Oregon town, create nuisance for residents

JACKSONVILLE (AP) — Deer are overrunning this picturesque town in rural southern Oregon.

Residents are demanding action, and officials are scratching their heads.

"All the plants we've had, they've ruined," said Corrine BeLau, who saw her tiger lilies, geraniums and begonias disappear. "They'll eat roses to the ground."

Her husband, Harry BeLau, circulated a petition last August demanding the city council take action to remove the deer.

The city council assigned the job to Police Chief David Towe. But he's at a loss.

It wouldn't be safe to bring hunters into town to start shooting, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife isn't wild about the idea of trying to round them up.

"It would be a dangerous and time-consuming operation," said Merv Wolfer, an assistant wildlife biologist for the department.

Since shooting and firearms are banned within city limits, "There's no way to control the deer population," he said.

Towe said the deer pose a

public safety problem as well. Several deer have been hit by cars, and it's just a matter of time before a driver is hurt.

"We now have reported sightings of cougars in the downtown area," he added.

Deer have probably come into town looking for food and water because a decade of drought has left little to eat in the forest, Wolfer said.

Ashland and Shady Cove, also in Jackson County, have had similar problems for several years, he added. Shady Cove passed an ordinance prohibiting residents from feeding deer, which makes the deer hang around.

Not everyone wants the deer run out of town.

"If I have to choose between the roses and the deer, I'd choose the deer," JoAnne Elias said.

Retired forester Rick Schwab is angry he had to spend two years building a 6-foot-tall fence to protect his tomatoes, roses and petunias.

"Why should I have to protect my property from a wild animal in an incorporated city?" he asked.

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