

LOANS

Continued from Page 1

program allows federal financial aid to be administered directly through the school instead of going through financial institutions such as banks.

Senior Jeff Norberg said the direct lending program is less confusing than previous lending programs. Before the program, he said his Stafford Loan was not given to him until two

or three weeks before the end of a term because of confusion with the bank.

"I had to take out a temporary loan from a credit union to pay for my tuition and living expenses because my Stafford was so late," Norberg said. "Every time I'd call the bank they'd say it would be another four to six weeks."

Vignoul said it is rumored that the in-school interest sub-

sidies for student loans may be eliminated. If so, students would have to pay the interest that their loans accrue while they are in school instead of the government paying for it.

"Either you pay interest while in school or let it accrue ... and interest compounding off of interest raises your debt," said Robert Nosse, executive director of the Oregon Student Lobby.

Eliminating this program

could save an estimated \$9.56 billion over five years.

Nosse said the reason they want to eliminate the subsidies is to eliminate the deficit.

"But our generation is going to be the ones to pay the deficit off," Nosse said. "How will we do this if none of us can afford to get an education and thus none of us get high paying jobs and we're unable to bear that kind of tax burden?"

BUDGET

Continued from Page 1

The budget passed four to one, with committee member Matt McGinnis casting the dissenting vote.

"After all the problems with our goal statement, we didn't think there would be much trouble with the budget," said the other co-director, Jennifer Carter, who was pleased the budget process is over.

"This time the meeting was not tense," Hood said. She said the budget increase will give the group a "chance to improve and increase" its programs, such as the upcoming "rally for women's lives" and "take back the night" events.

The group's leaders expressed relief that their battle is over, but said they are concerned student activism has recently come under fire. The Students For Choice co-directors named Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group as an example.

"The law really is on our [student groups] side," Hood said. "The rhetoric going on right now ... is not legally correct. I don't want people to get caught up in the legal rhetoric."

Hood said student's need to "become active and make themselves aware" of the ramifications that the attacks on student groups will have.

"This is a big deal," she said.

Marijuana possession undergoes scrutiny

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Back in 1973, when the counterculture was still in full bloom, Oregon became the first state in the nation to decriminalize the possession of marijuana.

Now, with a more conservative Legislature and increasing awareness about problems associated with drug abuse, a state lawmaker is working to reverse that law and make it a crime again to possess marijuana.

"As the parent of a 10-year-old, I believe it's time to issue a call for zero tolerance," Rep. Jerry Grisham, R-Beavercreek, said Monday. "This is a good place to start in turning away from the drug culture."

Under a bill sponsored by Grisham, people convicted of possessing less than an ounce of marijuana could face up to six months in jail. Under current law, the penalty is a maximum \$1,000 fine with no jail term.

Grisham's bill was to receive its first public airing today in the House Judiciary Committee.

Opponents of HB3251 said putting pot smokers in jail would have little deterrent value and cost a lot of money at a time when the state is trying to figure out how to pay for putting more violent offenders behind bars.

"We don't need to put people in jail for possessing a plant that's never killed anyone," said Chris Iverson of Portland.

Iverson and others have filed papers with the state for a 1996 ballot measure that would do the opposite: legalize marijuana use for adults and allow them to purchase it in liquor stores.

Grisham and other backers of HB3251 say that's not the direction the state is headed.

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