

Bill may give medical religious exemption

SALEM (AP) — A proposed law could make Oregon only the third state in the nation to protect parents of children who die when the family does not seek medical treatment because of their religious beliefs.

The state House has approved legislation that would provide religious exemption to laws regarding death due to abuse or neglect. House Bill 2492, drafted by Rep. Del Parks, R-Klamath Falls, is awaiting action in a Senate committee.

If approved, Oregon would join Iowa and Ohio as the only states with such laws.

Oregon law already protects parents from charges of child abuse or neglect if they decline medical care because of religious beliefs. But the law does not specifically extend the exemption to cases in which the child dies.

This discrepancy gained attention recently when charges of

manslaughter and criminal neglect were filed against a Brownsville couple whose 7-year-old son died of leukemia last November.

Loyd and Christina Hays, in keeping with their religious beliefs as members of the Church of the First Born, did not seek medical treatment for their son, Tommy.

The couple's lawyer, Paul Kuebrich of Albany, said he believes the current law protects his clients.

"This child neglect statutes specifically allow ... treatment through spiritual means," Kuebrich said. "And those statutes don't say, 'But only if it works.'"

Parks' bill would not automatically absolve parents, he said. "The defendant is not in a favorable position when they have the burden of proving that they were acting under spiritual or religious beliefs and that they were reasonable under the circumstances," Parks said.

CHANGE

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"We strongly encourage [affected] students to come to the meeting on Tuesday," she said.

Ramsing said the change from a walk-in system to a mail-in system is probably to reduce traffic in regional immigration service offices. "It's a really busy office," she said.

Sex offender program faces cuts

SALEM (AP) — White letters on a black board list the victims and their ages: Jerod, 9; Marty, 17; woman 59; Kathy, 3... The Victim's Memorial reminds some of Oregon's most dangerous sex offenders of the crimes that victims will never forget.

Before Timothy Seidel entered Oregon State Hospital's Sex Offender Unit, what he did to other people didn't matter to him.

"I hated everybody and as far as I was concerned everyone hated me," he said.

Seidel would rob stores, expose himself and hang out in adult bookstores. He would also break into homes to finance his drug habit, "and if I had a chance I would commit a sexual crime ... it was pretty sick," he said.

After a year in the Sex Offender Treatment Unit on Ward 41B, Seidel, who is to be released in October, said his outlook has changed.

"I've developed empathy for others, caring about their feelings and how I affect them. I won't change those feelings for the rest of my life."

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— **TIMOTHY SEIDEL**
former sex offender

But Seidel won't complete the treatment program. On July 1, the state's most intensive program for hard-to-treat rapists, pedophiles and sexual predators is scheduled to close.

At a cost of \$1.6 million every two years, the program was considered too expensive for the Department of Corrections to continue. It has been cut from the department's proposed budget, which is awaiting approval from the state Legislature.

The program can accept just 31 inmates at a time and can take anywhere from 18 months to two years to complete.

Corrections officials instead plan on expanding less-intensive treatment programs being operated at the Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario and at the Santiam Correctional Institution.

"It comes down to a comparison of cost," said John Foote, deputy director for corrections. "That seems rather cold, but that's the reality."

Supporters of the nationally recognized program say that without it, the state's most difficult sex offenders will not get sufficient services.

"There may be this attitude or atmosphere in many states now — let's take away treatment ... lock them up and throw away the key," said Ronald Wall, a therapy supervisor on Ward 41B. "Obviously, that's not going to work because they get out some day, and if they don't get treated, there's that increased chance of committing those crimes."

A study of 350 men who entered the program between September 1979 and May 1990 showed that 209 completed the program and were released.

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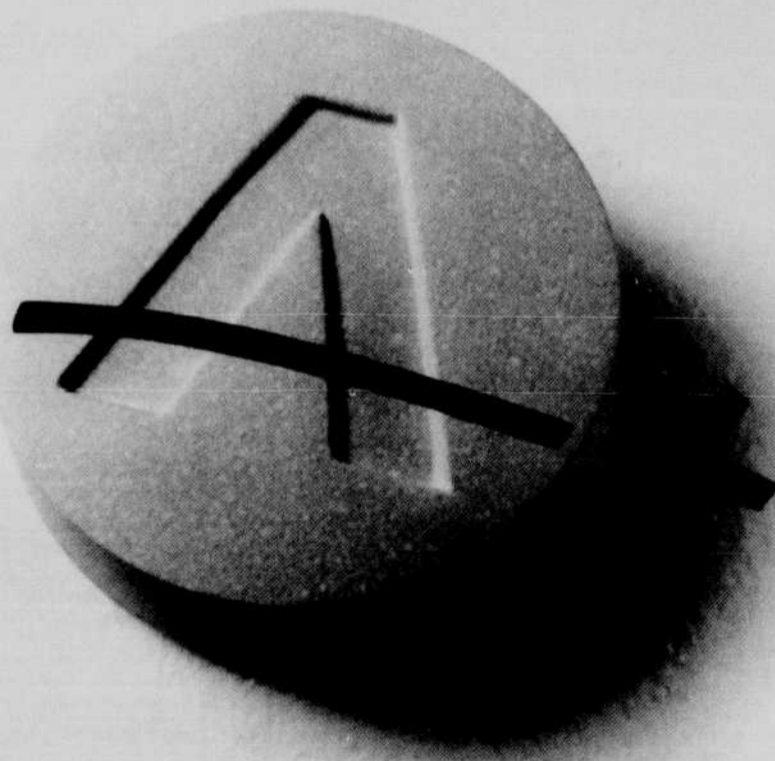
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