

Senate bill could damage Eugene's toxins law

■ **CHEMICALS:** The state bill would prevent all cities but Portland from collecting some fees from companies

The Associated Press

SALEM — A last-minute amendment to an Oregon Senate bill would undermine Eugene's new law requiring companies to report toxic chemical use, city officials say.

Under Eugene's Toxic Right to Know Law, businesses must make detailed reports on how hazardous substances are used in the manufacturing process. The program is funded by charging some businesses a fee.

Last week, the Senate Livability Committee attached an amendment to SB938, a bill that would allow Portland to collect fees from companies to pay for a variety of programs aimed at reducing toxic

chemicals. The new language allows only communities with a population of at least 350,000 to assess the fees, meaning the law would affect Portland and no other Oregon cities.

"They're doing sort of a sneaky stealth attack," said Randy Tucker, a lobbyist for the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group. "If this law goes through, Eugene can't assess any hazardous substance fee, which means they can't

fund their program."

Eugene City Councilman Bobby Lee, who is also a legislative aide to Sen. Susan Castillo, D-Eugene, is urging the full Senate to reject the measure when it comes up for a vote.

The amendment was offered by Ted Hughes, a lobbyist for the Pacific Northwest Paint Council. Paint manufacturers are among those who would be affected most by toxic reporting laws.

Hughes said he would ask for the amendment to be removed if it would mean overturning the Eugene law. But the chairman of the Livability Committee, Sen. Ted Ferrioli, likes the bill because it sets up a statewide reporting policy.

"Eugene may be giving up something they feel is near and dear to their hearts," the John Day Republican said. "But maybe the city of Eugene needs to grow up and look at the big picture."

Legislature limits scope of fee bill to political lobbying

■ **FEES:** The bill would ban the use of incidental fees for lobbying, which is currently against Oregon law

By Laura Cadiz
Higher Education Editor

An amended version of House Bill 3644, which proposed to eliminate the incidental fee process, passed out of the Higher Education Committee on Friday and will now only affect the incidental fees of student groups that contribute money to political campaigns.

"It's now a more reasonable bill," Bobby Lee, chief legislative aide to Sen. Susan Castillo, said. "It gives students an opportunity to examine how incidental fees are handled without pulling the plug on the whole process."

Ed Dennis of the Oregon Student Association and Larry Harvey, chief of staff for House Majority Leader Lynn Snodgrass, worked together to create the amendment.

The amendment states, "No amount from an incidental fee shall be used by any student organization for the purpose of supporting or opposing any political committee, candidate or ballot measure at the district, city, county, state or federal level."

"It's very carefully worded to give latitude, but it draws the line," Rep. Carolyn Oakley, a sponsor of the bill, said. "It still allows incidental fees for most organizations, but if folks get into the political ring, that's where the line is going to be drawn."

Oakley said the amendment is a positive step, as she said she feels student fees shouldn't fund political views.

"For groups that are going to get involved in politics, that's fine, but they shouldn't expect all students to fund it," she said. "Not all students agree with their philosophies."

Though Dennis helped create the amendment, he said OSA does not support the bill. "We don't like it," he said. "We think

there should be no infringement on students' rights to organize."

But Dennis said no student group will be affected under this bill because of an existing state statute that forbids any student organization from contributing money to political organizations.

"[The bill] doesn't single out any organizations," he said. "This is not going to impact anything that any of our groups does right now; we just have to continue to do what we do right now."

But the main difference between the existing law and this bill is that it has a punishment clause, Lee said.

According to the bill, any student organization in violation would be ineligible for student incidental fee funding for two years.

But Lee agreed this bill wouldn't create much change.

"Essentially, it would make into a law what has already been the practice. A lot of

core political organizations are not funded already," he said. "But, the questions are in the gray areas."

One of those gray areas is student groups collecting signatures on a petition to send to Congress. That activity may or may not be in conflict with the bill, Oakley said.

Another gray area is the definition of political activity, Lee said.

"At this point, the difference between academic freedom and political activity needs to be defined," he said. "That's a pretty fine line."

Under the bill, ASUO president-elect Bill Miner would have the power to decide that definition, Lee said.

Dennis estimates the bill will go to the House floor next week. Both he and Lee expect the House to pass it.

If the House passes the bill, it will then go to the Senate, where it may be amended again, Dennis said.

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