Smith asks Bush about assisted suicide policy

By Katherine Pfleger
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Gordon Smith said he asked President Bush if he was considering an executive order that could thwart physician-assisted suicide in Oregon, and the president said he may deal with the issue later on.

Smith, R-Ore., said Thursday he heard rumors about a possible order and called Bush last month. Though the president said there was "nothing immediate," he told Smith the issue was something the administration may deal with down the road.

Smith later followed up with a letter to request that any action be carefully considered to ensure that doctors can still treat pain and avoid retroactive punishments.

Smith opposes physician-assisted suicide and says he wants to make access to it "both undesirable and unnecessary."

Though executive action is still speculative and its shape unknown, it would most likely revisit former Attorney General Janet Reno's 1998 interpretation of the Controlled Substances Act.

Reno determined that federal drug agents couldn't move against Oregon doctors who help terminally ill patients die using federally controlled substances, such as barbiturates.

Bush's Attorney General, John Ashcroft, whom the Senate confirmed Thursday despite liberal opposition, could also take steps to reverse Reno's interpretation.

George Eighmey, Compassionate Dying of Oregon executive director, said any executive attempt to reinterpret Reno's decision, by an order or otherwise, would leave terminally ill patients with "inhumane" options.

"If you eliminate access to controlled substances, you have effectively overturned Oregon's law and rendered it unusable," Eighmey said. The administration would be "forcing people to resort to underground methods that we found unacceptable."

He said doctors typically prescribe lethal doses of sedatives and sleeping pills.

In 1998 and 1999, 43 people used the law, according to the Oregon Health Division. Statistics for 2000 are not yet available.

Hannah Davidson, Oregon Death With Dignity Legal Defense and Education Center executive director, said any executive action could make doctors question when and how they prescribe certain medications. Plus, she said, it goes against the intent of Oregon's Death With Dignity law.

Oregon's assisted suicide law went into effect in late 1997. Conservatives have long fought for its mitigation and reversal. Last congressional session, Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., thwarted attempts by Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., to negate the law through federal legislation.

When Smith wrote Bush on Jan. 25, he requested that the president include provisions in a possible order to ensure controlled substances are still a "legitimate" way to alleviate pain and discomfort, even if that increases the likelihood of a patient's death. Smith also asked the president to avoid modifying or expanding the DEA's authority, as well as guarantee that doctors will not be prosecuted retroactively.

BMX

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with police or security guards.

"We have nowhere else to go, so we just go where we're not supposed to," Bratton said.

BMX riders can't ride on private property. They can't ride on government-owned land. They can't ride on the University campus. They can't ride at either of the two skateboard parks in town.

They can ride on the Emerald Valley BMX track near Alton Baker Park, but that facility was made for racing and not stunt riding.

But a new location might open for BMX riders within two years. Eugene park planners are working toward building a skateboard park in the Bethal area near Meadow View Elementary School. Though the park will be designed for skateboarders, park planners say they would like to see the facility open to bikers.

"We're going to look at how we can make that facility usable for all users, including BMX freestyle riders," Parks Planner Robin Hostick said. "We're talking with the freestyle BMX community to discuss our options."

> *"We have nowhere else to go, so we just go where we're not supposed to."*
>
> **Nick Bratton**
> BMX rider

But there is one hang-up: An independent report prepared for the city found that BMX riders damage skate parks. According to the report, the five-inch metal pegs BMX riders attach to the hubs of their wheels gouge the ramps and scratch the rails of skate parks.

Hostick said park planners will likely look into that validity of that finding.

"Our goal is to make these facilities accessible to everybody, but on the other hand, we want to preserve these facilities," Hostick said.

Tim Owen, whose son is a BMX rider, said he would support a bike park because he worries that confrontations between bikers and police could lead to hostility and criticism of the sport.

"It kind of invites a renegade element by not providing a legal place," he said. "But it's really a great thing for kids. I'm glad my kid's into it."

Kevin Leonard, teen director and outreach director for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Emerald Valley, said a bike park in Eugene would not only give bikers a more enjoyable place to ride but also a safer one.

WRC

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Gassama said corporations have a strong role in "enduring poverty" in Third World countries, despite providing jobs for the people of those countries.

He said while the firms do offer some of the only opportunities for gainful employment in the poorest regions of the world, they represent the power structure that left those countries behind in the first stages of globalization during the 1940s.

At that time, Gassama said, there was a split in priorities between economic and social development.

"Human rights was placed on a second track and considered a junior partner," he said.

He pointed out that even as the rest of the world is growing steadily richer, "Third World workers are alienated from the fruits of their labor even more."

But Gassama said globalization is a mixed blessing. While it may have left most of the Third World behind economically, it also has helped fuel political movements in industrialized nations. One of these was the drive during the 1980s that helped end apartheid in South Africa.

Economics Professor Emeritus Henry Goldstein brought two points to the discussion. He argued that foreign investment does not mean higher unemployment in domestic industries, and broached the theory that while foreign production jobs may seem horrible by U.S. standards, they are often the best jobs in the Third World.

Goldstein explained that by moving jobs into other countries, it gives those countries the "wherewithal to purchase more," thus ensuring a strong demand for production in the home sector.

"A nation is capable of generating job opportunities regardless of trade deficits or surplus," he said.

He used the North American Free Trade Agreement as an example, pointing out that the "great sucking sound" that Ross Perot mentioned in his failed presidential bid in 1992 would signify jobs heading south for Mexico that never materialized.

In regard to working conditions, Goldstein pointed out that all the jobs in foreign factories are voluntary, and while they may be miserable by standards in the United States, they are the most attractive in Third World countries.

Anthropology and international studies Professor Lynn Stephen, who has extensive experience in Mexican labor issues, said it was vital that corporations be held accountable. While foreign companies may offer higher wages, Stephen said the same companies also drive down the average wage for a country.

"We have to look at the total effect of these corporations in the total economy," she said. "In general, workers in Mexico have lost ground."

University Senate President James Earl also offered his opinion on the matter by describing his experience of spending a year in a small village in India. He said he soon noticed how the village's economy and society were based on sustenance and not on amassing large amounts of wealth and possessions.

"When I hear 'India is in need of Nike factories,' from my own experience that just doesn't compute for me," he said.

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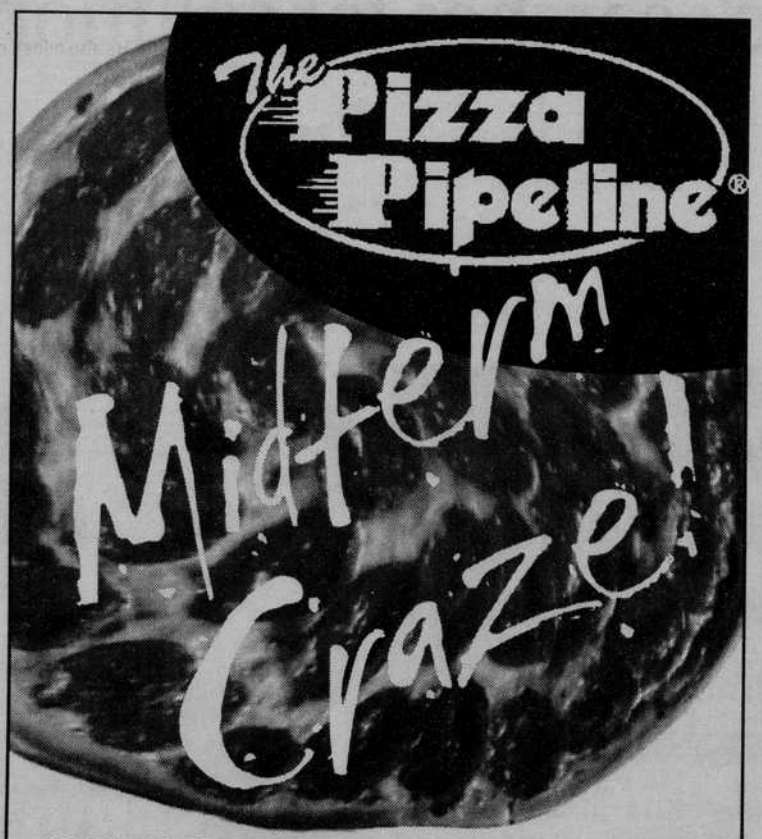

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