

Tuesday, July 22, 2003

EDITORIAL

Rape victims need access to birth control

The Oregon Legislature finally stopped its absurd wrangling last week and moved forward with a complete version of Senate Bill 752, a law that would provide funds for the medical treatment of rape victims, including emergency contraception.

The bill, which enjoyed much bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate, hit a rut when conservative senators, seemingly on a deceptive moral mission, symbolically pushed their tired argument that emergency contraception is somehow akin to abortion. Their efforts resulted in the removal of the emergency contraception provision from the bill as it passed through the Senate and moved into the House.

Senators claimed they nixed the provision after House Speaker Karen Minnis, R-Wood Village, handed down a directive saying the House would hear only one abortion-related bill this session — an abortion waiting-period bill — according to The Oregonian.

State Democrats, none too happy that senators were attempting to cut rape victims out of a perfectly reasonable method of birth control, fought to get the bill back into the Senate with the emergency contraception provision reattached.

They won, and so did all women in Oregon.

While we applaud the results, we won't let this one go so easily. We question why it took so much hassle to get such a no-brainer bill through lawmakers, and we scoff at the suggestion that emergency contraception comes anywhere near abortion. We also wonder why senators felt it was beneficial to remove a needed provision from a bill because they believed it mirrors a practice that has been legal for three decades.

First of all, an emergency contraception pill is not an abortion pill. The well-known RU-486, which has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to induce abortion, is a completely different class of drug known as an antiprogesterin. On the other hand, emergency contraception comes in two types: combined and progestin-only pills. Both contain the same hormones used in regular birth control pills, according to the Emergency Contraception Web site, maintained by Princeton University and the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals.

Emergency contraception is essentially a large dose of regular birth control pills, taken before conception occurs to prevent pregnancy — and is ineffective in terminating pregnancies. The falsehood that these pills have the power to destroy a fetus serves only to misinform the public and to push the anti-abortion agenda.

In fact, emergency contraception effectively prevents abortion. By using emergency contraception and avoiding an unintended pregnancy, especially in the case of rape victims, women would never conceive a child they otherwise might later want to abort.

We're glad the House understood the important distinction between an abortion pill and an emergency contraception pill when it passed the new version Friday. Now, we hope the bill will survive another round of bitter politics as it braves committee sparring once again in the Senate.

All in all, we hope the state will fully realize the need for all rape victims — not just those who are insured — to have the necessary medical services needed to ensure physical well-being after a sexual assault.

EDITORIAL POLICY

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailymerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.



Peter Utsey for the Emerald

Bill would improve transportation

By an overwhelming bipartisan vote, the Oregon Senate has passed House Bill 2041, more commonly known as the Transportation Investment Act of 2003. This bill represents the most significant single investment in our transportation infrastructure in the history of this state. What does this mean for Oregon? This legislation will accomplish three important goals.

First, this is the largest job creation and economic development legislation this session. HB 2041 will sustain 4,750 family-wage jobs each year for the next ten years, putting Oregonians back to work in the construction field. In addition to on-site employment, we will also increase employment in related fields such as concrete, steel and aggregate. Job creation of this na-

ture will not only help reverse our state's spiraling unemployment rate, but it will provide local economies with a shot in the arm as these newly employed individuals spend money on goods and services.

Second, HB 2041 will make a much-needed investment in our state's transportation system. We will begin to aggressively address more than 400 seriously cracked bridges throughout our state. These cracks create serious problems as bridges are closed or weight limits are imposed. Currently, trucks are being forced onto secondary routes, which increases driving time and costs and creates potential dangers to all motorists by having heavy trucks on smaller roads not engineered for such traffic. Fixing these bridges will both improve safety on our roads and help our economy grow by ensuring that commerce can move efficiently across Oregon.

Finally, this legislation will prepare Ore-

gon communities for future growth and help facilitate economic development. Priority construction projects will be in areas that will support future growth and job creation. By focusing on these areas, we are making sure that Oregon is prepared for the upturn in the next business cycle. This legislation is key to move people and goods safely and efficiently throughout the state.

Legislators, the governor's office, the American Automobile Association, Oregon Truckers Association and many other groups were involved in months of negotiations and deliberations to craft legislation that is fair and has widespread support. HB 2041 now goes to Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski. This represents an important step forward for safe and adequate transportation and economic recovery in Oregon.

Rick Metsger, D-Mt. Hood, and Bruce Starr, R-Hillsboro, are members of the Oregon Senate.

UO financial issues are easily 'solved'

I don't really understand what all the fuss is about regarding these recent hard times. As far as I'm concerned, there are many answers to the University's financial crises:

1. Ninety-nine percent of the student body should start competing for cans, bottles and change on the main streets of the campus to make up for the funding that allows our football team to receive their books neatly packaged with their names clearly labeled

every term. This is essential, of course, because as many of us know, routing patterns and blocking strategies are no match for bookstore-aisle navigation. Besides, receiving \$869 per month is a small price to pay for brain cells. Go Ducks!

2. Seventy-five percent of the student body should see a reduction in classes offered, as we now have a nice, new Memorial Plaza. Who cares if the buildings we have classes in are older than our grandmothers? As long as they don't actually fall on top of me, I've got no complaints.

3. Let's ask those "soul savers" and "Je-

sus lives" proponents to start paying rent for all the space they take. Besides, isn't there still that whole separation between church and state thing or did that too jump out the window like a Bush adviser?

4. If all else fails, just slap another surcharge on my bill and let the Department of Public Safety fine me when I go ballistic.

You see, I told you everything would be fine. All it takes is some ingenuity and creativity on the part of our financial advisers, and voila! A balanced budget.

Adrienne Stuart is a senior majoring in education.

ONLINE POLL

Each week, the Emerald publishes the previous week's poll results and the coming week's poll question. Visit www.dailymerald.com to vote.

Last week: Should Department of Public Safety officers have the power to issue certain drug- and alcohol-related citations?

Results: 41 total votes

No, they aren't real cops — 26.8 percent or 11 votes

No, in fact, DPS should be altogether dissolved — 21.9 percent or 9 votes

Yes, it will improve campus safety — 22 percent or 9 votes

No, they lack the training to do so — 19.5 percent or 8 votes

Yes, and they should get guns, too — 4.9 percent or 2 votes

Leave me alone! — 4.9 percent or 2 votes

This week: What's your favorite way to enjoy the summer sun?

Choices: Dipping in the river and swimming in the ocean; Hiking and exploring the mountains; Barbecues, parties and wild camping trips; Bike rides and strolls in the park; Two words: television and air conditioning; Leave me alone!