

Bill increases DUI penalty

Oregon lawmakers hope to deter drunken driving with Senate Bill 421

By A. Sho Ikeda
Senior News Reporter

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed several bills last week that will penalize Oregon drunken drivers more harshly.

The most notable of the drunken driving bills was Senate Bill 421, which would double the prison penalty for criminally negligent homicide and manslaughter in the second degree from 18 to 36 months. These two charges could be placed on a driver involved in a fatal accident while driving under the influence.

Representative Jeff Barker, D-Aloha, was one of the lawmakers who played a major role in getting the bills passed.

"Driving under the influence of intoxicants is a reckless behavior that results in thousands of deaths in this country every year," Barker said in a press release. "By passing this legislation, we are showing Oregonians that we are serious about preventing habitual offenders from getting behind the wheel."

Senate Bill 421, also known as "Brian's Bill," was named after 23-year-old Brian Hood, who was killed in 1998 when his drunken roommate rolled the car while driving wildly in a Bend park. Hood's parents, Anne and Bruce Pratt of Springfield, were behind the movement to change Oregon's drunk driving laws.

Sandy Nelson, state vice chairwoman of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, said the organization worked closely with Anne Pratt to push several of the bills forward.

"We did everything we could to support her," Nelson said. "MADD's mission is to assist victims to stop drunk driving."

Nelson said it was important to get SB 421 through the Oregon Legislature because the current laws for causing a death while driving under the influence were too lenient.

"A drunken driver could kill someone and get 18 months in jail," Nelson said. "But you could hit someone with a baseball bat and get five years."

Kulongoski signed many other bills related to drunken driving in addition to SB 421. Senate Bill 302 requires defendants to enter a guilty plea to a drunken driving charge if they do not pass a diversion program, and House Bill

2900 imposes a fine of \$500 to \$1,000 for suspects who refuse to take a Breathalyzer test, in addition to any other fees prescribed by local law enforcement. Senate Bill 2885 revokes a defendant's drivers license for life if the driver is convicted of DUII for a third time, and Senate Bill 348 raises the maximum fine to \$10,000 for driving under the influence with children in the vehicle.

Nelson said the state chapter of MADD was in great support of SB 348.

"We will support child endangerment issues at any possible turn," Nelson said. "Children shouldn't lose life and limb because of an adult's poor decision."

According to the Eugene Police Department, there were 566 DUII arrests in 2002, down from 657 in 2001. There were 88 incidents in which drivers refused breathalyzer tests.

In Oregon, 179 deaths were attributed to driving under the influence in 2002, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Approximately 41 percent of all traffic deaths in Oregon involved alcohol or other intoxicants.

Contact the city/state politics reporter at shoikedadailyemerald.com.



Freshman Siena Ranuio-Nunes attends her freshman interest group on Wednesday. "I see all the same people in other classes so it's really familiar," she said.
Adam Amato Photo Editor

FIGs supply students with familiar faces

Freshman Interest Groups help freshmen become academically and socially involved at the University

By Chelsea Duncan
News Reporter

When freshman Siena Ranuio-Nunes first learned she had been accepted to the University, she was a little overwhelmed. After originally searching for a campus of 5,000 students or fewer, the University's population of more than 20,000 students seemed intimidating. Then she learned about Freshman Interest

Groups and signed up.

"I think the FIG kind of helps," she said. "It makes it feel like a smaller setting."

In the FIG program, which is available each fall term, freshmen take a group of classes comprised of two general education courses and one College Connections course, said Amy Hughes Giard, education program assistant for first-year programs. Students can choose from different classes, which set the theme for the FIG. The College Connection course allows freshmen to meet faculty members, get adjusted to academic and social life at the University and

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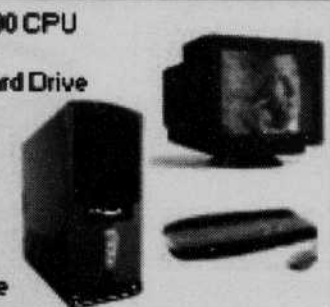


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