



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Proceeds from a proposed tax on business sales could go to an education-specific fund. Many schools, like Warrenton Grade School, shown here, are struggling with infrastructure problems.

Business tax takes shape

Money from levy could go to education

By CLAIRE WITTHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A proposed tax on business sales authored by Democrats is going to be amended over the weekend before it is expected to go to the floor of the state House of Representatives.

Legislators on Thursday went over several amendments to the proposal, which is still taking shape, and is expected in the next iteration to include more specificity on a proposal to direct the tax to an education-specific fund, and to include a proposed exemption on agriculture and forestry businesses.

State Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, asked staff to draft two versions, one that does — and one that does not — include the exemption for agriculture.

The current draft increases the corporate income tax temporarily and then institutes a tax on businesses with sales of more than \$3 million annually. The rate varies depending on sector, and businesses with more than \$150,000 but less than \$3 million in annual sales would pay a flat rate of 2.5%. The proposal also includes reductions in the personal income tax.

It is projected to raise more than \$500 million a year.

The so-called corporate activities tax is a significant piece of legislation this session, part of an effort to rec-

oncile what some lawmakers have described as the state's volatile tax structure. Lawmakers are scrambling to fill an approximately \$1.4 billion gap between expected revenues and expenses in the next two years.

The Joint Committee on Tax Reform is expected to meet again Monday morning. Republicans on the committee Thursday were critical of the tax, which Democrats in the House and Senate have advocated. The bill will need some Republican support in order to meet the legally required vote threshold for raising new revenue.

The current version of the bill dedicates the money collected by the commercial activities tax, minus a pass-through credit, to an education-specific fund.

Sen. Herman Baertschiger, R-Grants Pass, said the proposed structure creates "winners and losers" depending on the business type.

Hass said 92 percent of Oregon businesses have less than \$3 million in annual sales.

The committee also plans to hear from the state Department of Revenue next week. The department would be responsible for administering and collecting the new taxes provided for under the legislation. The Department of Revenue has come under criticism from lawmakers this session, including for the fact that the state is owed more than \$3 billion in unpaid taxes, fines and fees.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

Bill would reclassify some felony drug crimes as misdemeanors

Marquis calls legislation 'white flag'

By LINCOLN GRAVES
KATU News

SALEM — A bill being considered in the state Legislature would change the way small-scale drug crimes are treated in Oregon.

HB 2355 is aimed at reducing unjust profiling. However, the part of the bill that deals with drug-crime classification has drawn most of the controversy.

"This bill runs up the white flag," said Clatsop County District Attorney Joshua Marquis. "It surrenders to heroin and meth addiction."

Marquis said the bill sends the message to criminals and the community that heroin and meth "just aren't that big a deal."

The district attorney says a felony drug crime, simply by the nature of its severity, acts as a deterrent to future drug use.

"We're talking about providing the incentives, frankly the coercive tools to force people who are in addiction into treatment," said Marquis.

The ACLU of Oregon fired back at that assumption.

"The idea that there isn't still some penalty associated with not going through your treatment and not actually doing the things you're sup-



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

District Attorney Josh Marquis opposes a bill that would reclassify some drug crimes.

posed to do when you get this misdemeanor, that's just absolutely false," said Kimberly McCullough, policy director for the ACLU of Oregon. "The war on drugs has failed. We need to start treating drug use and addiction as a public health issue."

The debate over drug-crime classification has overshadowed the main goal of the bill — reducing profiling in Oregon. The bill would require law enforcement agencies to collect data on the age, race, ethnicity and sex of a person contacted during a traffic or pedestrian stop. That data would then be reviewed by 2020 and it would be used to develop strategies for reducing profiling. Drug-crime classification became part of the bill during task force discussions.

"The drug war is inextricably tied up in and inter-

Marquis said the bill sends the message to criminals and the community that heroin and meth 'just aren't that big a deal.'

twined with the issue of profiling," said McCullough. "In order to find out who's using drugs or who possesses drugs there's a real incentive to find people. What we found is that profiling is often

amplified, that disparities are often amplified in those discretionary decisions to search someone."

The bill is still in committee but proponents are optimistic about its eventual passage.

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New carnival rides coming to downtown Long Beach

By AMY NILE
EO Media Group

LONG BEACH, Wash. — The Rides at Long Beach isn't getting a free ride on the city, at least not anymore.

The City Council approved a permit earlier this month that allowed the for-profit amusement park free use of a public space to expand its carnival-style attractions.

Owners Russell Maize and Chris Summerer got the go-ahead to put two of six new rides in the parking lot east of their downtown business. But now, Long Beach leaders want them to pay. Freebies aren't allowed by state law.

City Administrator David Glasson asked an attorney to check into rules

that ban giving away public resources. After listening to legal advice on Tuesday, he decided to suggest the council ask the business to pay \$100 a month to rent the space.

He said Maize and Summerer seem agreeable. They're already taking deliveries, including the first new arrival, a gentle roller coaster called the "Wacky Worm."

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June 21, 1992: The 50th Anniversary of the Japanese attack. Over 150 Fort Stevens veterans gathered at Battery Russell to remember the event and to dedicate the Pacific Rim Peace Memorial.

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