

Board to vote on change to public pension system

Associated Press

SALEM — The board overseeing Oregon's public pension system is set to vote on whether to downgrade assumptions about how much return the system will get on its investments.

Changing the assumptions about returns on the investments that fund payments to public employees in retirement

could increase the pension's unfunded liability from \$22 billion to \$50 billion, meaning that state agencies and school districts would have to put more money into the system in the coming years, The Oregonian reported. The decision would also impact employee benefits, employer benefits, public services and the state's long-term economic competitiveness.

The Public Employees Retirement Systems Board currently assumes its investments will earn 7.5 percent annually. Market experts have said that is a gross overestimate that does not reflect the real size of today's underfunded public pension system and it minimizes required contributions from government employers. The state's actuary, Milliman Inc., estimates the board will

make a 6.7 percent earning on its investments over the next two decades.

The board has voiced its intention of lowering the rate, but it is unclear by how much the rate will be lowered. Board member and Eugene businessman John Thomas said should the board vote for a rate higher than what is being recommended "we better have some very specific reasons and meth-

odologies to back that up. I personally don't see where those changes would be."

Some employers support cutting employee benefits that they say are too generous as an alternative solution — in addition to lowering the assumptions.

"If they're trying to cover someone politically, stop it," said Jim Green, deputy executive director of the Oregon

School Boards Association. "The system needs to be looked at and reformed, and keeping the assumed rate high, or using rate collars is just allowing policymakers at the state level to say, 'It's really not that bad.'"

If the board does not lower its assumption on Friday, Milliman has said it will flag the discrepancy in its next report card on the system. The action could hurt Oregon's credit rating.

Astoria man charged with drug crimes

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

An Astoria man has been charged with numerous drug crimes after a traffic stop last weekend.

Astoria Police stopped Michael Konecny, 29, in a pickup Saturday night for allegedly driving without insurance. He also allegedly did not present a driver's license because it was criminally suspended.

He was wanted for a parole

violation and arrested. While searching the car, police found a large amount of cash, syringes, two grams of heroin, 10 grams of methamphetamine, 30 Suboxone prescription pills and several other drug-related items.

In addition to the parole violation and license-related charges, Konecny has been charged with possession and delivery of heroin, methamphetamine and a schedule III controlled substance for the Suboxone.

Brownsmead man pleads not guilty to sex abuse and drug charges

Indicted for crimes against a teenager

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

A Brownsmead man accused of multiple sex abuse and drug charges against a teenager pleaded not guilty Wednesday.

Greg Howard Smith, 50, was indicted last week on charges of luring a minor, three-counts of first-degree sodomy, first-degree sexual penetration with a foreign object, delivery of a controlled substance to a minor and furnishing alcohol to a person under 21 years of age.

He allegedly gave alcohol, marijuana and possi-



Greg Howard Smith

bly other drugs to a 16-year-old boy earlier this month. While being treated at Columbia Memorial Hospital, the boy

said he woke up to Smith sexually abusing him inside a camp trailer near the residence at 42800 Fish Lane where Smith was staying. The boy had spent the previous night with Smith, whom he described as a friend.

The Clatsop County Sher-

iff's Office arrested Smith, a registered sex offender, later in the week. Also known as Greg Tyrone Jesus, he previously was sentenced to six years in prison in Columbia County in 2006 after being convicted of first-degree sex abuse and second-degree sodomy. A third-degree rape charge in Clatsop County that same year was dismissed.

In a previous court appearance, Smith used a profanity to liken the charges against him to bull feces. Circuit Court Judge Paula Brownhill warned him that he would be held in contempt of court if he used that language in further proceedings.

Bail has been set at \$250,000, and an early resolution conference has been scheduled for August.

Wyden bill encourages recreation

By CASSANDRA PROFITA
Oregon Public Broadcasting

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden introduced a bill Wednesday that aims to simplify the permitting process for outdoor recreation on public lands.

The Oregon Democrat says getting outdoors often requires obtaining permits, parking passes and camping fees that can be confusing, complicated and time-consuming.

He wants to cut the red tape around access to public lands to encourage outdoor recreation, giving an economic boost to surrounding communities.

The Recreation Not Red Tape Act, co-sponsored with

U.S. Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, requires the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to review their permitting processes with an eye toward minimizing costs and processing times, and create educational materials to help people applying for permits.

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