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Police Reforms Gain Traction

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

ing intervention by an officer witnessing police misconduct. It also requires officers to report abuses to “a supervisor.”

This year, lawmakers are tweaking the new law to strengthen how the complaints are handled. It is sponsored by Rep. Janelle Bynum, a Democrat who chairs the House subcommittee on equitable policing.

“For me, the original trigger was

the George Floyd case,” said Bynum, who is Black and from a Portland suburb.

Portland was an epicenter of Black Lives Matter protests that erupted nationwide after Floyd’s death. On the night of Sept. 5, a Black resident came to police officers to inform them their tear gas was seeping into his house, affecting his son and dog. One officer whacked the man on the head with his baton, causing a concussion.

Other officers told their colleague the man was an area homeowner, not a protester. Bynum says that shouldn’t matter, that even if he was a protester, he shouldn’t be attacked unprovoked.

“He wasn’t doing anything. And so I never got really clear answers from the city about why that was OK,” Bynum said.

Police said back then that the incident was being investigated, but a half-year later they remain mum on the outcome or status.

“I have not been provided information to release about the incident,” Lt. Greg Pashley, a police spokesman, said in an email. “Generally, the Professional Standards Division does not provide updates about internal investigations.”

Bynum’s new bill aims to address such cases. It requires complaints to

be filed with a direct supervisor of the reporting officer, their chain of command or with the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, or DPSST, which licenses law enforcement officers across the state. The bill sets a three-month deadline for investigations to be completed.

Under the bill, if an investigation confirms misconduct occurred, the officer’s unit must notify the DPSST, which would be tasked with establishing a database for reports of misconduct.

Rep. Ron Noble, a Republican who co-chairs Bynum’s subcommittee and previously served as a police officer for 28 years, said at a hearing that the additional steps over last year’s bill are needed.

“This is a result of our experience in ensuring that what officers do report does get investigated and is followed up on,” Noble said.

Failure by an officers to intervene or report misconduct are grounds for disciplinary action. The employer may not retaliate against a reporting officer.

Maryland lawmakers are also working on legislation containing duty to intervene provisions. So is Washington state.

When the Washington state Senate passed such a bill in February, Republican senators opposed. Some said it

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