

Senate approves anti-hazing measure

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. — The Oregon Senate approved a measure Thursday to help prevent hazing on college and K-12 school campuses in Oregon. Senate Bill 444 sponsored by Senate President Peter Courtney passed the Senate on a 26-2 vote.

Hazing is ritualistic test or task involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into an athletic team, club or other group.

“As a former coach and lifelong fan of team sports I realize the importance of both discipline and team building. Hazing is not an appropriate way to encourage either,” Courtney said. “Parents shouldn’t stand for it. Educators shouldn’t stand for it. Students shouldn’t stand for it. The Oregon Legislature and our state statutes shouldn’t stand for it, either.”

Courtney said he introduced SB 444 because despite the fact that the Oregon University System and various school regulations prohibited athletic teams from engaging in hazing activities, Oregon Revised Statutes actually exempted them from being covered by the anti-hazing law.

Senator Suzanne Bonamici (D-Beaverton), who carried the bill on the Senate floor, said that in addition to expanding the statute to include athletic teams, SB 444 also updates the definition of hazing and adds the prohibition of hazing at K-12 schools.

A 1999 study by the NCAA and Alfred University found that approximately 80 percent of college athletes were exposed to some form of hazing including drinking contests and humiliation, the Senate President said.

“Most people have been exposed to hazing in some form or another during our educations, and most of the time it is generally regarded as “no big deal” and considered just kids having fun,” Courtney said. “However these foolish pranks can sometimes lead to the severe injury or death of young men and women who feel obligated to participate in order to fit in with a group. Nobody should be required to risk their health or their lives to be part of an athletic team or any other group.”

The measure now moves to the House of Representatives.

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