

Senate votes to step up teacher penalties for sexual contact with high school students of all ages

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. — Oregon high school students will be better protected with legislation passed by the Senate Tuesday morning. Senate Bill 48 allows the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission to revoke the license and permanently bar a teacher or administrator who is found guilty by a preponderance of evidence of rape, sodomy, sexual penetration, or sex abuse of a student in grade 12 or below — not just those under the age of 16.

—Current law requires that a teacher's license be revoked if they're found guilty of inappropriate behavior with a child under sixteen, said Senator Floyd Prozanski (D-Eugene), chair of the Judiciary Committee. —But sexual relations between a teacher and a high school student are always inappropriate. This bill spells that out.—

The Senate also passed SB 123 this morning, allowing the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission to better conduct investigations of misconduct by requiring the Department of Human Services to share reports relating to child abuse for an individual who is under preliminary investigation or complaint.

—We need to make sure that all the facts are on the table when there's an allegation of misconduct, said Senator Suzanne Bonamici (D-Washington Co./Portland). —This bill provides the Commission with the best information available so they are able to make well-informed decisions when issuing licenses.—

Both bills are part of a package of legislation this session that aim to protect Oregon children in the classroom. Already, the Senate has passed SB 46, which allows fingerprinting of any public school employee, and SB 47, relating to discipline of student teachers for misconduct.

“It’s important that the necessary tools are available when cases of misconduct occur,” said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin). “With the package of bills we’ve passed this session, Senate Democrats have demonstrated their commitment to keeping Oregon children safe in the classroom.”

Both bills will now go to the House for consideration.

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