

Senate votes to restore labor rights for firefighters, police officers

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

First Responders Regain Ability to Discuss Issues Affecting Their Own Safety

The Oregon Senate voted Wednesday to pass Senate Bill 400, legislation that will restore bargaining rights for firefighters, police officers and corrections officers and allow them to discuss issues that directly affect their own personal safety. Senator Kate Brown (D-Portland) and Senator Floyd Prozanski (D-Lane and Douglas Counties) were the Chief Co-Sponsors of the bill.

"We ought to ensure that the men and women who provide for our safety have the ability to discuss their own," said Senator Floyd Prozanski, who also carried the bill on the floor. "This bill will allow public safety employees to discuss safety issues before someone's life is lost rather than after."

Senate Bill 400 restores the ability of first responders in the state's public safety jobs to negotiate on safety and staffing issues when bargaining for their contract. This is important because these same employees are prohibited by Oregon law from striking. Previous to a change in the law in 1995, employees were allowed to negotiate on safety and staffing issues.

"Nobody has earned the right to talk about safety issues more than the Oregonians who put their lives on the line to keep the rest of us safe," said Senator Kate Brown (D-Portland). "This legislation allows our firefighters and police to discuss their own safety at the bargaining table."

"When it comes to public safety, we stand with the men and women who are on the front line," added Senator Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin).

Senate Bill 400 will allow employees to bargain on safety and staffing issues but does not guarantee any outcomes or increased staffing levels. The legislation also applies only to employees that are prohibited by law from striking.

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