

Oregon Senate passes sexual orientation anti-discrimination bill

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Legislation will provide protection from discrimination, includes religious exemption; Senate Bill 2 now moves to the House for consideration

SALEM- The Oregon Senate on Wednesday passed Senate Bill 2, legislation that provides protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation. Under current law, individuals can be denied employment, housing and public services based on their sexual orientation. Senate Bill 2 will provide the same protection that has long been provided to other groups that have faced discrimination.

Senate President Peter Courtney "After an extraordinary debate, the Oregon State Senate came together again to show that equality is not a partisan issue," said Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem/Gervais/Woodburn).

"I truly believe it is our job to guarantee every single Oregonian protection from discrimination," said Senator Ginny Burdick (D-Portland). "Oregon only grows richer every time it knocks down another barrier to recognize an excluded group."

The passage of Senate Bill 2 comes after years of work in the Senate and as part of recommendations made by the Governor's Task Force on Equality. The task force released its report last December and strongly urged that Oregon establish anti-discrimination and civil union legislation to ensure protection for all Oregonians. Addressing concerns from the religious community, Senate Bill 2 provides an exemption for religious institutions.

"This legislation protects Oregonians from discrimination but also respects the beliefs of our religious institutions," said Senator Brad Avakian (D-Portland/Beaverton). "This law is fair in its protection of all citizens and the institutions that we all value."

Senate Majority Leader Kate Brown (D-Portland), an advocate for anti-discrimination legislation throughout her legislative career, expressed a sense of accomplishment with passage of the bill.

“After a long journey, Oregon took a major step forward in providing protection for all Oregonians,” said Senator Brown. “I was proud and humbled by the vote I took in the Senate today.”

Senate Bill 2 will now move to the House of Representatives for full consideration.

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