

Oregon Senate approves anti-price gouging bill

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Today, the Oregon State Senate overwhelmingly approved Senate Bill 118, commonly referred to as the "anti-price gouging bill."

Senate Bill 118, sponsored by Attorney General Hardy Myers, prohibits retailers and contractors from setting excessively high prices for certain essential goods and services in times of an emergency or abnormal market disruption. The Department of Justice receives numerous complaints at times of emergencies in which consumers have difficulty buying necessary items, such as electrical fans during heat waves, or are swindled by fraudulent contractors during heavy rain and floods.

Oregon AG Hardy Myers

"Many consumers find themselves with no choice but to accept unfair, bogus offers for assistance during an emergency or natural disaster," stated Myers. "This bill protects Oregonians from being "gouged" by high prices and unreliable service when they are in dire need of legitimate goods and services."

SB 118 defines "unconscionably excessive" prices by evidence that the amount charged exceeds the price offered in the usual course of business by 15% or more, or the amount charged is 15% or higher than the same or similar goods or services readily obtainable by consumers in or around the area.

State Senator Avel Gordly (I-Portland) presented the bill to the full Senate for today's vote. "The Oregon Department of Justice states this measure is necessary because some merchants and/or wholesalers have taken advantage of consumers by selling certain essential goods and services at abnormally excessive prices after severe weather events or other emergencies," stated Senator Gordly. She added, "Senate Bill 118 helps us by giving us a necessary and essential tool for our state emergency preparedness toolbox."

Concern about price gouging in natural disaster situations was discussed in the Senate Commerce Committee, chaired by Senator Floyd Prozanski (D-Eugene), which voted on SB 118, and the joint Emergency Preparedness and Ocean Policy Committee, chaired by Senator Joanne Verger (D-Coos Bay). During today's Senate vote, Sen. Verger stated, "While we would like to hope that no one would take advantage of those surviving a disaster of any kind, we know it can happen. Senate Bill 118 assures

Oregonians that it won't happen to them.â€•

The bill provides exceptions for cost increases for certain types of goods and services during an abnormal market disruption when the increase is attributed to additional costs on employers, additional costs necessarily incurred in procuring essential consumer goods or services, internal costs related to the situation and increased costs unrelated to the situation.

Senator Majority Leader Kate Brown (D-Portland) stated, "Senate Bill 118 is an important piece of legislation because it protects Oregonians when they need it most."

SB 118 will be the sent to Speaker of the House for assignment to a committee.

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