

House OKs mandate for Hood locators

Search and rescue | A bill requiring climbers to carry the devices goes to the state Senate

By **JANIE HAR**
THE OREGONIAN

SALEM — Climbers on Mount Hood would be required to carry a locator device under a bill endorsed by the Oregon House on Wednesday.

Representatives approved House Bill 2509 by a 33-22 vote after lengthy floor speeches on personal responsibility, government mandates, rescue costs and saving lives.

Rep. John Lim, a Republican from Gresham, introduced the bill after three experienced climbers died on Mount Hood in December. None carried a locator device.

Climbers and rescuers, for the most part, oppose the bill. They say most experienced mountaineers already carry such devices and that the units could spur risky behavior in some climbers by giving them a false sense of security.

"They are opposed to mandates without teeth and one that disregards their opinion," said Rep. Chuck Burley, R-Bend, in opposing the bill.

Supporters called the proposal a common-sense public safety regulation, much like mandating seat belts or life jackets. "Carrying a device that could save your life is worthwhile," said Rep. Jerry Krummel, R-Wilsonville.

The regulation would apply to climbers on Mount Hood above 10,000 feet, from November through March. A person or

group would be required to carry a two-way communication device, such as a cell phone, and one of the following: a global positioning system receiver, personal locator beacon transmitter, a mountain locator unit or another comparable device.

Lim tried to delay the starting date until 2010, but the bill as written — if approved by the Senate and not vetoed by the governor — would kick in Jan. 1.

Lim's idea got a boost in February, when another trio of climbers carrying locator units was rescued. Clackamas County Sheriff's Office officials credited the units with saving their lives; other rescuers said the group would have been found regardless.

Democrats provided most of the "yes" votes for the bill, but the issue crossed party lines.

Eight Democrats, including House Speaker Jeff Merkley of Portland, joined 14 Republicans in voting no.

Rocky Henderson, a member of Portland Mountain Rescue, said he was outraged at legislators' inconsistent actions. Earlier Wednesday, they voted down a proposal requiring people riding all-terrain vehicles to wear helmets.

"I'm going to work diligently to make sure to defeat this bill," he said.

The bill heads to the Senate, where the office of Senate President Peter Courtney declined to comment on its chances. Gov. Ted Kulongoski has not taken a position on the issue, said his spokesman Jake Weigler.

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Latest spending plan would boost savings

Washington | Senate Democrats propose more money for health care and education

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OLYMPIA — Senate Democrats on Wednesday offered a new two-year state budget plan that would spend heavily on schools, colleges, health care and salaries, but would sock away \$766 million into savings.

The new \$33.3 billion proposal generally tracks with plans from the Democratic governor and the Democratic-dominated state House, but proposes the highest level of savings suggested so far this session.

Minority Republicans in both chambers saw some improvement over the House plan, but said legislative Democrats and the governor still want to spend too heavily and save too little.

After the plan passes the full Senate, tentatively planned for Saturday, the House and Senate will have three weeks to negotiate a compromise deal before the scheduled end of the legislative session.

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billion surplus, the House approved a spending plan that would leave \$654 million on the table, none of it in a rainy day account.

The overall House spending level would be \$33.4 billion.

The Senate's new counterproposal would spend about \$100 million less and pad the reserves accordingly — \$607 million in unrestricted savings and \$159 million in the rainy day reserve.

Prentice and the governor signaled Wednesday they would push the House to send the voters a proposed constitutional amendment to create the new account.

House Appropriations Chairwoman Helen Sommers, D-Seattle, said she would continue to resist the plan, seeing it as an unwise intrusion on lawmakers' budget-writing responsibilities. She had no immediate comment on the Senate's budget.

The Senate plan would provide nearly \$1 billion in education enhancements, including early education programs, daylong kindergarten for more children, improvements in math and science instruction in the K-12 system, and teacher pay raises and class-size reductions. Sommers signaled Wednesday they would push the House to send the voters a proposed constitutional amendment to create the new account.

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House firmly rejects ATV helmet mandate

Safety | The state's Parks and Recreation Department doubts other bills will pass

By **JEFF MANNING**
THE OREGONIAN

The Oregon House on Wednesday resoundingly defeated a bill that would have made it mandatory for all-terrain vehicle riders to wear a helmet while on public lands.

House Bill 2062 fell by a margin of 34-22. The helmet bill was widely seen as the one ATV safety measure of the five introduced this session with a decent chance to become law. Some of the most vocal ATV activists, who condemned proposed ATV age restrictions and a proposed passenger ban, favored making helmets mandatory.

She was not wearing a helmet.

Nationally, ATV deaths and injuries are running at record rates. More than 750 people lost their lives and 135,000 were injured in 2005.

HB2062 was one of four ATV safety bills introduced this session at the request of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. The others would prohibit ATV riders from carrying passengers; require all ATVs be titled; and institute mandatory training for ATV riders.

A Parks and Recreation official said the bill's defeat casts doubt on the rest of the department's ATV legislation.

"The political reality of where this leaves us is all three of our House bills are dead," said Jim Myron, legislative coordinator for the Parks and Recreation Department.

