



PRESS RELEASE

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House Votes to Protect Victims of Sexual Assault

Bills extend statute of limitations, fund SAFE kit testing

The Oregon House today voted to pass two long-needed bills to protect victims of sexual assault and to better equip law enforcement with the tools needed to bring the perpetrators to justice.

[Senate Bill 1571](#), which passed 58-0, will direct the Oregon State Police to adopt rules to prioritize the testing of Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence kits and funds the department with an additional \$1.5 million to hire nine new staffers to begin working through the testing backlog.

According to testimony from the Oregon State Police, as of September 2015 there was a backlog of approximately 5,652 untested sexual assault forensics kits. Processing these kits may assist in identifying suspects and in prosecuting sex crimes, helping victims seek justice. Anonymous kits will not be tested, but OSP will be required to keep them for at least 60 years.

“This bill is about protecting victims of sexual assault,” says Rep. Ann Lininger (D-Lake Oswego). “And this bill is about preventing future sexual assaults by making sure that law enforcement is using every tool at their disposal to catch repeat offenders.”

SB 1571 will also create a Task Force on Testing Sexual Assault Forensics Kits to ensure that the most effective, efficient procedures are being followed.

The House also passed [Senate Bill 1600](#), which removes the statute of limitations for rape and sexual assault if there emerges corroborating physical evidence of the crime.

This corroborating evidence can be through non-DNA physical evidence, such as a video tape recording; a confession by the defendant to that particular crime; statements made by the victim that are made close in time to the alleged crime; or when multiple victims come forward alleging crimes similar enough to be in the same charge.

“This bill sends the message that survivors matter, and it’s a message we must send,” says House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson. “With this bill, we’re giving a voice to the thousands of other rape survivors who have lived for too many years in fear and silence.”

SB 1600 passed 56-2. Both bills will now go to the Governor for her signature.

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