



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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CONTACT: Rick Osborn (503) 986-1074
Rick.osborn@oregonlegislature.gov

Oregon Senate votes to crack down on bias crimes

SB 356 adds crimes motivated by ethnicity or gender as intimidation crimes

SALEM – The Oregon Senate passed a bill today that will help protect people from bias crimes based on ethnicity or gender, in addition to other factors.

Senate Bill 356 – which passed the Senate on a 27-2 vote – renames intimidation crimes as bias crimes and adds gender and ethnicity to the list of prohibited motivators for these crimes.

“Today we are sending a clear message that Oregon is a place where these types of crimes are not tolerated,” said Sen. James Manning (D-Eugene), who co-carried the bill on the Senate floor. “Oregon is a place where all are welcome and protected under the law from being threatened or harmed, simply because they may look different, practice a different religion, are living with a disability or come from another part of the world, or even who they love.”

The bill adds fourth-degree assault as a second-degree bias crime if the act was committed alone and motivated by a gender, ethnicity or other bias. The bill also permits the Attorney General to initiate civil action based on these offenses.

“This bill is designed to re-establish confidence in a number of communities across this state that indeed their neighbors and their justice system believe they should not have to worry about threats or violence as they walk down the street,” said Sen. Lew Frederick (D-Portland), who co-carried the bill. “And if they encounter it, we, the senators in this chamber, will have their back.”

Under the current law, a person commits second-degree intimidation when he or she – because of a victim’s race, color, religion, sexual orientation, disability or national origin – commits one of the following acts:

- Tampering or interfering with property without right to do so and with intent to substantially inconvenience the victim;
- Assaulting the victim in some way physically; or
- Intentionally alarming the victim by threatening to physically injure them, a member of their family, or causing substantial damage to the property of the victim or the victim’s family member.

Senate Bill 356 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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