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NEWS RELEASE

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Riley's bill to crack down on predatory towing gets hearing

SB 117 public hearing and work session scheduled for Tuesday, March 21

SALEM – Sen. Chuck Riley (D-Hillsboro) took a huge step forward in his battle against predatory towing practices.

Senate Bill 117 – which cracks down on towing companies that go around looking for cars to tow and who stick the owners with outrageous bills – has been scheduled for a public hearing and work session in the Senate Committee on Judiciary. That committee is scheduled to meet at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, March 21, in Hearing Room 343 of the Oregon State Capitol.

The bill adds towing provisions that are enforceable as unlawful trade practices and speeds up the civil process in circuit court for the owner or operator of a motor vehicle to challenge the validity of a tow.

Before a vehicle can be towed, the bill also requires that there be a sign in plain view indicating that parking in that area is restricted or prohibited, as well as a signed consent form by the property owner or a representative for the property from which the vehicle is to be towed. A vehicle can be towed for blocking access for emergency vehicles, blocking in another car or blocking an exit.

In situations where the owner or operator of the vehicle is present at the time of the tow, the tower must release the vehicle at no charge unless the hookup is complete. If the hookup is complete, the tower would be able to charge a fee that does not exceed the hookup fee.

“This is an important issue for a lot of folks in my district and throughout the Willamette Valley,” Riley said. “These predators are going around towing people’s cars aggressively and then charging obscene rates for these folks – many of them cash-strapped and vulnerable – to get their cars back. Basically, in many cases they are holding people’s only means of transportation hostage. Not all towers are bad people, but this bill certainly helps create some protections so that the bad actors out there can be held accountable, and we can limit damages to people who mistakenly or unknowingly park their cars in the wrong spots.”

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