



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

February 26, 2009

CONTACT: Molly Woon (503) 986-1074
molly.woon@state.or.us

Legislation to crack down on debt collectors who harass Oregonians passed by Senate

SALEM – Legislation that allows the Attorney General to pursue legal action against overzealous debt collectors was passed by the Senate this morning. SB 328 will give the Attorney General authority to pursue legal action against debt collectors who use unlawful practices such as threatening arrest, using obscene language, or attempting to collect interest or fees in excess of the actual debt.

“This short, simple, and significant bill is to assure that collectors are operating honestly, fairly, and without intimidation and that they face consequences when they violate the law,” said Senator Suzanne Bonamici (D-NE Washington Co. & NW Multnomah Co.) during her floor speech. Bonamici, chair of the Senate Consumer Protection Committee, also shared stories from testimony heard in committee, including from people who were threatened with physical harm, subject to obscene language, and called repeatedly in the middle of the night.

Specifically, SB 328 adds unlawful debt collection practices to the list of offenses the Attorney General is able to investigate and enforce under the Unlawful Trade Practices Act.

“Consumer protection is a cornerstone of the Senate Democrats’ agenda for the 2009 session,” said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin). “Oregonians need to have somewhere to turn if they’re being harassed or intimidated by unscrupulous debt collectors. This legislation adds teeth to the current law.”

The Department of Justice will be able to conduct this enforcement work with its available resources, at no additional cost to the state. The provisions in SB 328 are similar to that in Washington, California, and several other states.

“It’s time to close the west coast loophole and let unscrupulous debt collectors know they are not welcome here,” said Bonamici.

SB 328 will now move to the House of Representatives for consideration.

###