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# NEWS RELEASE

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### Senate approves "Silver Alert" bill

Salem, OR - The Senate voted unanimously Thursday to create a new response protocol for finding vulnerable seniors who have gone missing. Senate Bill 1577, modeled after the successful "Amber Alert" program, will help families quickly locate loved ones who have wandered off.

"It is scary to have an elderly family member disappear, often because of dementia or Alzheimers," said Senator Tim Knopp (R-Bend), who introduced the legislation.

"Keeping seniors safe in these situations is often as simple as quickly alerting and mobilizing law enforcement and the community."

Senate Bill 1577 directs law enforcement agencies to develop policies for responding to instances of missing seniors with mental impairments. New protocols will include training for officers, processes for reporting a missing senior and mechanisms for alerting to the public.

"Finding a missing person quickly is critical to protecting their life and welfare," said Knopp. "As a growing number of Oregonians suffer from diseases affecting their mental faculty, it is important that we are prepared to keep them safe and secure."

Currently there are about 80,000 Oregonians with Alzheimer's, a number that is expected to climb to 110,000 by 2025.

Sixty percent of people with Alzheimer's will wander from their home. Sixty percent of Alzheimer's patients who wander, if not found within 24 hours, will suffer severe injury or death. Eighty percent if not found within 72 hours will die. A person with Alzheimer's may not remember his or her name or address, and can become disoriented, even in familiar places.

Senate Bill 1577 also contains provisions for fighting Medicaid fraud. The bill requires the Oregon Health Authority to develop cutting edge solutions to prevent and identify fraudulent activity.

"Meeting the needs of the vulnerable as intended by Medicaid means efficiently using the resources we have, and stopping those who would abuse the system," said Knopp. "Those who game and cheat the system aren't just gaming and cheating the program and taxpayers, they are gaming and cheating those who are truly in need."

Senate Bill 1577 now goes to the House of Representatives for approval.

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