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## Rep. Stark: Sober centers give police options

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### Representative Duane Stark's Sober Center Bill passes in House By Taxpayer Association of Oregon Foundation

On June 25, 2015, the house passed a bill by Representative Duane Stark that would give legal protection to sobering centers, places where police can take people who are publicly intoxicated. Under current law, police can take intoxicated people home, to treatment facilities, or if none are available, to jail and hold them for up to 48 hours. A sobering center would offer police another alternative.



The sobering center bill (HB 2936) was sponsored by the Committee on Health Care at the request of the Grants Pass Sobering Center and carried by Representatives Duane Stark and Carl Wilson, both from the Grants Pass area.

The bill defines "sobering center" and protects centers from being sued by giving them civil and criminal immunity to for actions taken in good faith, on probable cause, and without gross negligence. It requires a center to affiliate with a treatment program and consult with treatment providers about policies, training, and other issues.

No treatment is available at sobering centers, although the centers may provide referrals where people can get help with addiction issues. Because sobering centers are more economical to run, free up jail space for more serious offenders, and keep the intoxicated out of hospital emergency rooms, rural counties with reduced budgets will especially benefit from having sobering centers available.

The bill passed the House unanimously with no opposition.

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