

PAWNSHOP BILL PASSES SENATE COMMITTEE

By Brandon Beard
Staff Writer

HB 2172 Do Pass

■(GIT) A measure that would limit the number of pawnshops in the state passed the Senate Committee on Small Business Thursday. **HB2172**, by Committee Chairman James Maddox, D-Lawton, would refuse a pawnshop license to anyone wishing to set up shop in a county with less than 11,000 people. The bill would also prohibit the shops from locating in a county where the number of existing pawnshops exceeds a ratio of one per every 11,000 people. Members passed the measure, 5 to 3, after striking its enacting clause.

Twelve-year pawnshop owner Andy Eckhard said the measure was necessary to both his profession and clients. "When I started in this business, there were about 300 pawnshops statewide," he said, "now there are over 500."

Calling the business a form of banking, Eckhard said "fly-by-night" pawnbrokers are taking advantage of customers. Many pawnshops open shop with minimal capital, stay in business a few months and leave town with their customer's merchandise. "Pawnbrokers have a fiduciary responsibility to their clients," he said.

"I go down the line and I can't think of any business that wouldn't like this kind of bill," said Sen. Mark Snyder, R-Edmond. He said the measure would limit competition among pawnbrokers. "If this passes, I don't want to see the onslaught of businesses that will be here next year saying 'we want the same protection as the pawnbrokers'."

According to Eckhard, Oklahoma has one pawnshop for every 6,200 people, making it the state with the most pawnshops per capita in the nation. The average amount loaned from a pawnshop is \$57.

The bill's House author, Rep. Ron Kirby, D-Lawton, said, though he has gotten flack because of it, he makes no apologies for carrying the bill. "Pawnshops paid \$2.1 million in taxes and \$154 thousand in permit fees last year," he said. "They have asked for help and why shouldn't we give it to them?"

The bill, he said, is no different than the state limiting the number of nursing homes, liquor stores or new car dealers. "We cater to out of state businesses," he said, "whenever someone shows up with a brief case, promising new jobs, we throw them a cocktail party and call the chamber of commerce."

Passing the House last month by only one vote, Kirby said he expects his bill to have problems in the Senate as well, which is the bill's next stop.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PASSES FOUR BILLS

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HB 2893 Do Pass, Amended

HB 2899 Do Pass

HB 3029 Do Pass

HCR 1066 Do Pass

■(GIT) Four House measures passed the Senate Economic Development Committee Thursday, including **HB2893**, by Sen. Ted Fisher, D-Sapulpa, which creates the Oklahoma Limited Liability Partnership Act.

The bill was amended, removing all language on page 6, lines 10 through 16.

The measure passed with a vote of 8 to 0.

HB2899, by Rep. M.C. Leist, D-Morris, modifies the powers, duties and responsibilities of the Oklahoma International Trade Development Council.

The measure passed with a vote of 8 to 0.

HB3029, by Sen. Howard Hendrick, R-Bethany, creates the Targeted Workforce Incentive Act.

The measure was amended, adding clarifying language and a new subsection. The new language places a time limit of three years for which a business is exempt from fees and taxes.

(Continued)