



Capitol Network News

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SPARKS FLY OVER HORSE TRIPPING BILL

By Brandon Beard
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The Senate floor was the place for "a bunch of Perry Mason lawyer talk" Wednesday, said Sen. Lewis Long, D-Glenpool, as mostly Republican opposition arose to a section of **SB680**, the so-called "horse-tripping bill."



Sen. Lewis Long

Through an earlier floor amendment, the bill was modified to include a provision relating to domestic violence. The measure, by Long, was originally aimed at preventing the sports of bear wrestling and horse-tripping, making them felonies.

In a debate that lasted nearly an hour, Senate lawmakers argued over several points of the bill's Conference Committee Report. An issue of some concern is a provision requiring convicted domestic abuse offenders to participate in counseling or treatment, as a condition of suspended sentence.

"This sounds to me like something that a bunch of counselors got together and wrote to generate business for themselves," said Sen. Mike Fair, R-Oklahoma City. "I cannot, in good conscience, industrialize counseling in the statute books."

The provision requires counseling for the defendant, who, at the discretion of the court, may be liable for the cost of those services.

"If both parties don't go to counseling, you have accomplished nothing," said Sen. Dave Herbert, D-Midwest City. "Believe it or not, there are women who incite their husbands so, after they take a beating, they have complete control because he is so apologetic."

Sen. Keith Leftwich, disagreed with the opposition to the provision, saying it was only an alternative to prison sentencing.

"This is just one option for a suspended sentence," he said. "We are not talking about angles here. We are not talking about normal, functioning families, this won't affect them."

Senate GOP Leader Gerald "Ged" Wright, R-Broken Arrow, said the provision was a way for courts to maintain jurisdiction over domestic violence offenders. He called it a "hammer to keep control."

Another provision in the bill includes "a person living in the same household as the defendant" in a list of victims that are protected under the domestic abuse provision of the bill. Those convicted under the provision would be guilty of a felony. It carries a fine of \$3,000. Concerns arose that the language is too broad in nature.

Aimed at such relationships as common law marriages, the provision faced resistance because it "winds up painting a wide brush stroke."

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DHS ASKS FOR OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) An opportunity — That's what the Department of Human Service's executive director told members of the General Conference Committee on Appropriations' subcommittee on health and human services was needed for the agency to make improvements in its efficiency and performance.

"I hope if you don't hear anything else

today," George Miller, DHS executive director told the subcommittee members, "that you hear this — All we want is the opportunity to improve our efficiency and performance."

Miller appeared before the panel to discuss the recommendations contained in a recent study of the agency by the independent consulting firm of Peat-Marwick. A key component of the consultant's findings are the labeling of more than 200 DHS jobs as "questionable" and that those positions be considered for elimination.

Miller said the report was "a catalyst to utilize procedures to streamline, restructure and re-engineer" the department. Without the report, he added, some necessary changes might not otherwise be considered or accomplished.

Currently, Miller told the subcommittee, a committee from the Commission on Human Services, the department's governing

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