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"The provision puts pretty severe remedies on two college roommates who decide to duke it out," Sen. Brooks Douglass, R-Oklahoma City, told *Capitol Network News*. He said the language could be interpreted to include college dormitory and nursing home situations as well.



**Sen. Brooks Douglass**

Douglass, a member of the bill's conference committee, said current law offers "ample provisions" for addressing domestic violence.

"The bottom line is everything he [Long] is trying to do is already in existing law."

Though his signature appears on the bill's conference committee report, he ultimately voted against the bill.

"The point is," said Sen. Angela Monson, D-Oklahoma City, "that those people do live together, so one person is trapped, resulting in one person potentially having to leave their residence." She said there is a distinction between roommates and "two friends who have a fight at the local bar."

The provision creates a more severe penalty than if the defendant was a stranger, said Sen. Howard Hendrick, R-Bethany. He said the provision created higher penalties for only certain types of assault.

Calling the provision "sloppy legislation," and "for political purposes," Sen. Jerry

Pierce, R-Tulsa, said it would "denigrate the quality of the law."

"You are creating a new category of assault and battery," he said. "Assault and battery is assault and battery — you don't need this bill to accomplish this." Pierce said current law was sufficient to handle the problem.

A clearly angry Sen. Penny Williams, D-Tulsa, author of the bill's domestic violence provision, blasted opposing parties, saying her amendment "puts things in balance."



**Sen. Penny Williams**

"We seem to be treating the bears as victims rather than treating people as victims," she said, referring to the amendment's provision that increased the fine for domestic violence, which was originally lower than the fine for bear wrestling.

A one-time victim herself, Williams said victims of domestic violence, at one time or another, must eventually go home. She said

the bill would "give law enforcement the teeth it needs."

A source close to Williams said she was the victim of an assault and battery that occurred away from her home and by a stranger.

"Her point is she didn't have to fear going back to her home — If they [domestic abusers] are on a deferred sentence, and are coming back home, they need to go to counseling, or put the guy in jail and keep him away from her."

"I think it's shameful for people to get up and debate this," said Long in his closing remarks. "What we are trying to do is aim this at some two-bit bully who beats up on his wife."

Members voted 32 to 13 to adopt the conference committee report. The bill and its emergency clause passed with a vote of 35 to 9. Voting nay were Sens. Campbell, Cole, Douglass, Fair, Ford Gustafson, Hendrick, Herbert, Martin, Pierce, Rubottom, Snyder and Wright. Sens. Capps, Long (Ed) and Shedrick were excused from voting. Long lodged a motion to reconsider, allowing him to re-address the measure within three legislative days.

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board, is examining the consultant's recommendations and meeting with department division heads to determine which recommendations would be implemented.

"I would like to use the report to the fullest extent possible to improve our efficiency," Miller said.

Miller said a number of steps had already been taken in that direction, including discussions with legislators over a possible severance package for DHS employees who lose their jobs, talks with representatives from Oklahoma's peer states over successful programs there, the creation of an administrative task force to develop a business plan for the department and talks with vendors over the possible outsourcing of certain "non-core" functions.

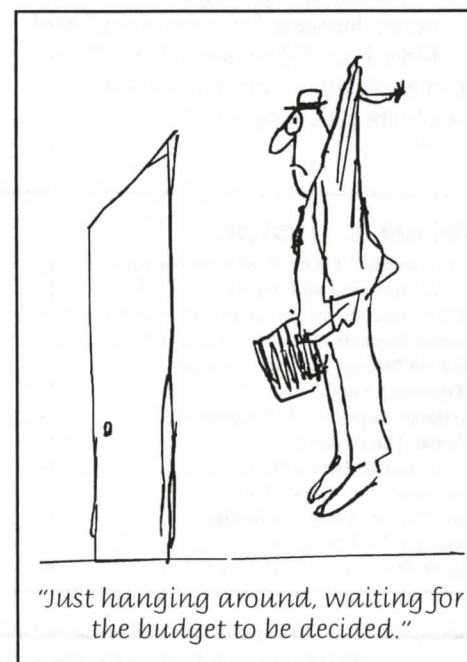
The outcome of any changes, Miller said, must keep in mind the goal of maintaining at the highest level possible the services mandated of the department.

"We can do better," Miller reiterated, "and we would like you to give us that opportunity."

Miller revealed that the department was currently examining the future elimination of some 295 field clerical positions. That,

he explained, would be made possible by the use of new technologies.

Asked what other positions might be eliminated, Miller said he would not know until the commission's committee had time to review the report and speak with division leaders.



*"Just hanging around, waiting for the budget to be decided."*

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