

Washington state considers bill to punish out-of-bounds skiers

By Andrea Castillo, Daily Evergreen

Washington skiers and snowboarders who choose to cross into clearly marked closed mountain areas could be charged with second-degree trespassing if a bill introduced in the Washington State Senate passes.

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5186, sponsored by Sen. Jim Kastama, D-Puyallup, passed its third reading by the Rules Committee on March 4 with a vote of 43 to 5. ESSB 5186 is accompanied by House Bill 1484.

Kastama, who works as a ski patrol at Crystal Mountain, said his goal in creating this bill is to prevent deaths and injuries of adventurous skiers. He said in the last 10 years alone, five people have died and 520 people have been caught skiing in closed areas at Crystal Mountain.

“There’s something about skiing that makes people feel invincible,” he said. “I know really good skiers that tell me they’ll take a chance and go into these closed areas. We find people just ducking under that rope and disobeying the signs. It’s clearly indicated that you could die.”

According to the bill, skiers who choose to knowingly trespass in an area that has signs indicating its closure can be fined up to \$1,000 or 90 days in jail. However, Kastama said first-time offenders would most likely be given community service hours.

Kastama said the bill got off to a rough start this session because many people did not understand the difference between

closed areas and out of bounds or backcountry areas.

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