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Legislative Briefing

House OKs funding ban for human cloning

The House of Representatives gave preliminary approval Thursday to legislation that would ban state funding for human cloning.

Rep. Bob Stump, R-Peoria, said HB 2221 is simply a recognition that most people believe that human cloning is morally wrong. Stump said the measure would not ban such research but simply ensure that state taxpayers do not pick up the bill.

Panel: Use Constitution to stop gay marriage

The House Judiciary Committee voted 6-3 to ask Congress to amend the U.S. Constitution to define marriage as between one man and one woman.

Proponents of House Concurrent Memorial 2005 acknowledged that courts in Arizona have upheld laws banning same-sex marriage. But without a federal constitutional amendment, they said Arizona could be forced to recognize a gay marriage allowed by activist judges in other states.

Foes said the Constitution should not be amended to deny rights to anyone because of sexual orientation. The measure now goes to the House floor.

Spousal-rape penalty

Without dissent, the Senate gave tentative approval to increasing the penalty for spousal rape.

Current law classifies sexual assault as a Class 2 felony, punishable by up to 14 years in prison. But spousal rape is a Class 6 felony, carrying a maximum penalty of 18 months behind bars.

Sen. Robert Blendu, R-Litchfield Park, said there is no legitimate reason for the distinction. SB 1040, which still requires final Senate approval, faces an uncertain fate in the House.

Senate OKs both trials, traffic school for tickets

State senators voted to let motorists who get tickets challenge them in court and, if they lose, still go to traffic school to wipe the record clean.

Current law requires someone to opt for defensive driving classes before a court date. Sen. John Huppenthal, R-Chandler, said that forces those who believe they were ticketed unfairly to give up their right to a trial.

Huppenthal agreed to amend SB 1038 to say that someone who goes to court and loses has to pay the court costs and the charges for driving school.

Senate votes to index standard deductions

Without debate, the Senate agreed to increase the standard deduction people can take on their state income taxes to account for inflation.

Under current law, a single person who chooses not to itemize is entitled to a \$4,050 standard deduction; the figure is double for married couples filing jointly. Sen. Dean Martin, R-Phoenix, said that has not increased since 1990.

SB 1094, which still requires a final roll-call vote, would mandate automatic inflation adjustments.

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