

## House endorses money for soccer stadium

By Michelle Cole, The Oregonian

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Steven Nehl/The Oregonian/2007 Merritt Paulson tours PGE Park in 2007 after becoming the new owner of the Portland Beavers baseball team.

SALEM -- Portland Mayor Sam Adams, City Commissioner Randy Leonard and soccer team owner Merritt Paulson scored a victory in the Oregon House Wednesday, when lawmakers endorsed a bill offering up to \$5 million in state income tax revenues back to the city to help pay for a \$34 million remodel to PGE Park.

[House Bill 2531](#), would skim income taxes off salaries from players and other team employees earning more than \$40,000 a year. The money would not be available until July 1, 2011.

But critics argued that it sets a bad precedent, taking away much-needed dollars to pay for services and using it for a local soccer stadium.

"This is a dangerous bill," said Rep. Phil Barnhart, a Eugene Democrat and chair of the House Revenue Committee. "Let Mr. Paulson find it somewhere else."

Supporters argued that major league soccer is a clean industry that will create jobs and spotlight Portland as a world-class tourist destination.

If major league soccer does not materialize, the city would not get the money from the state, said Rep. Jules Bailey, D-Portland.

"Sports bring in new money to the state other forms of entertainment don't," he said.

The bill passed 33-26. (Update: There was some vote-changing after the session. The final vote was 31-28). It now heads to the Senate. It's future is uncertain as Gov. Ted Kulongoski doesn't like the bill. Anna Richter Taylor, the governor's spokeswoman, stopped short of using the word "veto."

The governor doesn't like the bill and won't sign it, she said.

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