

Prison bond issue gets Senate OK

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ALBANY — As lawmakers began their annual rush to pass bills before the summer recess, the state Senate yesterday agreed to ask voters in November to approve \$500 million in new spending to ease jail overcrowding.

Assembly approval is expected today.

If approved by voters statewide, the measure would provide \$350 million to be spent on three 512-bed state prisons and to expand the existing facilities by more than 4,000 beds. State prisons now are operating at 105 percent of capacity.

In addition the bond issue would provide \$125 million in matching funds for New York City and county jails. The city would get about \$50 million under the plan. It would also provide about \$25 million for detention facilities for young persons and the mentally disabled.

Sen. Donald Halperin, D-Brooklyn, said the state's tougher sentencing requirements will have no meaning, unless additional cells are found.

"It's a well known fact and oft repeated statistic that less than 2 percent of violent offenses reported to the police result in state prison sentences," Halperin said. "The inability to house many criminals is a reason often given for a failure to incarcerate."

Lawmakers started off the day hoping that they could complete

work in time to recess for the summer as early as tonight. But action on a complicated tax package worked out last night by legislative leaders to bail out the Metropolitan Transportation Authority will bring them back next week.

There were these other Capitol developments yesterday:

¶ **Drunk Driving** — The Assembly passed legislation sponsored by Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly, D-West Brighton, that would require arraigning judges to immediately suspend the license of any person charged with driving while intoxicated who is involved in an accident involving death or physical injury and who has been convicted of a previous drunk driving offense. The bill faces an uncertain future in the Senate.

¶ **Connelly bills** — Gov. Carey signed into laws two bills sponsored by Mrs. Connelly. One authorizes the Richmond County clerk to switch to a microfilm system of retaining land maps. The other requires the commissioner of mental retardation and developmental disabilities to issue an annual plan for care of patients under his jurisdiction.

¶ **Uninsured auto owners** — The Assembly approved a measure that would mandate stricter penalties for motorists who file false papers indicating they have proper auto insurance. The measure would also require insurance carriers to notify the Department of Motor Vehicles when a policy is canceled.