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SB 1765

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BILL PROPOSING PAID LEAVE FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEE-ATHLETES
TRAINING FOR OLYMPIC LEVEL COMPETITION

Qualified potential Olympic athletes would get up to 90 days paid leave of absence to enable them to train and engage in international competition under a bill proposed today by Senator Nicholas C. Petris (D-Oakland).

"It is high time that we took our Olympic game participation seriously," Senator Petris said. "We are losing an enormous number of very talented athletes because they can't afford to take the time that is needed for training. The reason we have lost so much ground in international competition over the past decade is not because our athletes are inferior," the Senator added.

Under the bill, applicable only to public employees, World Class athletes who are eligible for qualifying rounds leading to a berth on a United States team would be entitled to up to 90 days leave with pay.

Three states have such legislation now--Pennsylvania, Ohio and Minnesota.

"I believe that California, with its vast wealth of quality amateur athletes, should assume a leading role in assisting these dedicated, hard-working young men and women in their quest for athletic excellence, especially when that expertise will be demonstrated worldwide as members of internationally competing United States teams," Senator Petris declared.

The 90 day period may be composed of the "broken-time" concept in which an athlete may take off up to eight hours of any work week to train.

If the athlete granted leave is an employee of a local public agency, the state will reimburse the employer for the actual cost to employ a substitute.

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"My hope is that this legislation will encourage private business in California to give leaves to qualified World Class athletes as approximately 30 companies have done elsewhere," Petris noted.

"Among them are The Pillsbury Company and Honeywell, Inc. of Minneapolis, Texaco Inc., and Exxon, Inc. of New York, Ampex Corp. of Redwood City, California, Standard Oil of California, Libbey-Owens-Ford of Toledo, Anheuser-Busch, Inc. of St. Louis, Missouri and Brockway Glass Company of Pennsylvania.

The International Olympic Committee gave its approval to the "broken-time" concept in 1975. It does not impair the athletes amateur status, Petris reported.

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