

Senate panel votes Nazi curbs

By Bob Secter

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SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — A Senate judiciary committee Tuesday overwhelmingly approved and sent to the Senate floor two bills designed to prevent a neo-Nazi group from marching in the heavily-Jewish village of Skokie.

The march, which has been stalled for more than a year because of legal wrangling, is now tentatively scheduled for June 25.

The vote came after the committee listened to nearly two hours of often emotional

testimony from legal experts, Jewish community and religious leaders and Holocaust survivors scarred by the atrocities they witnessed and experienced during World War II.

"Give us peace of mind," pleaded Sol Goldstein, a Skokie resident and survivor of a Nazi concentration camp. "Let us live in our homes peacefully. Let our children not be reminded of the horrors we saw."

SPECIFICALLY, the legislation, sponsored by Sen. Howard W. Carroll (D-Chicago) and Sen. John J. Nimrod (R-Glenview), would arm Skokie village officials with some new

legal tools to prevent the Nazis from marching.

One of the bills would create a new crime of criminal group defamation, a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail. A person would be guilty of the crime if he distributes hate literature or participates in a derogatory demonstration in a public place.

The measure is based on an old Illinois criminal libel statute that was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1952 but which was left out of a sweeping revision of the state's criminal code in 1964.

The other bill would prohibit parades by quasi-military hate groups such as the Nazis.

EVEN IF THE legislation is eventually struck down in the courts, Carroll acknowledged that its passage would give Skokie officials a chance to buy some time by tying up the march in court challenges.

The Illinois Supreme Court has refused to stop the Nazi parade, despite pleas from Skokie residents that the march would revive horrible memories among the 7,000 Skokie residents who survived the Nazi Holocaust.

The committee heard warnings Tuesday from Jewish leaders that the march would definitely incite violence in the suburb.