

Oregon Voices News

News from Oregon that you can use

Oregon Voices Supports Justice, Fairness, and Rational Laws

Oregon Voices is committed to justice and rationality in policies regarding sex offenses and will continue to work toward supporting legislation that will positively impact the lives of registered citizens and their families. OV strives to provide up-to-date information about such things as seeking relief from the registry and Oregon's use of the Static-99R to establish classification risk levels.

We will continue to support the efforts of other organizations that are also striving to make lives better for AICs and for those reentering our communities. One such group on the national level is the Council of State Governments and the other is Oregon's Partnership for Safety and Justice. We are encouraged to witness the work that they are doing in the areas of mental health, prison reform, and re-entry and will be highlighting some of their efforts in this newsletter.

Recent OV Meeting Held

Earlier this month, OV individuals met via Zoom. That wasn't the original plan as we were really hoping to meet in person and had reserved space in June as well as in July, at Hilltop in Oregon City, ending up having to cancel both times. Over the past year, nearly all of the board members have experienced health issues, especially broken bones and surgeries and were hesitant about exposing themselves to yet another increase in COVID variants by meeting in person. We also heard from many of you that you didn't feel ready to begin attending "live" meetings either.

It has been difficult for all of us to resort to meeting virtually for a variety of reasons such as wanting to protect one's own privacy, not having the means to connect virtually, and feeling somewhat insecure about how to navigate via Zoom. We get it. After all, it has been nearly three years since we have had the pleasure of coming together, visiting, sharing stories, supporting one another, eating good food, and learning about various topics that are of tremendous help to RCs. So, let's work toward holding our next meeting "in person" and not having to look at each other on a screen! Stay tuned.

OV News Inside: New Mental Health Hotline, CSG Offers Leadership, p. 2; New Fearless Group, p. 3; Oregon Receives Funding, OV Meets with Albany Mayor, p. 4; OV Legislative Committee, PSJ Takes the Lead, p.5; **Insiders Corner**, pp. 6-7; U.S. Marshals Conduct Sweeps, Oregon CURE, Miscellaneous Information, p. 8

The New 988 Mental Health Hotline is Now Operational!

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) implemented the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline on July 16, 2022.

Here's what you need to know! You can now call 988 for help when experiencing a mental health crisis and connect with a trained mental health professional. You are supposed to be able to receive help right away and not have to “sit on the line” forever.

According to a recent NPR article, “The primary goal of the new number is to make it easier for people to call for help. Lawmakers and mental health advocates also see this launch as an opportunity to transform the mental health care system and make care easily accessible everywhere in the United States. The Biden administration has invested more than \$400 million in beefing up crisis centers and other mental health services to support the 988 system.”

Psychologist Benjamin Miller, President of Well Being Trust, states that up until now, “Unlike other medical emergencies, mental health crises overwhelmingly result in a law enforcement response,” “If you look at the data from the police, about 20% of their total staff time is spent responding and transporting individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis. Just last year, more than 2 million people with serious mental illness were booked in jail. And nearly a quarter of fatal shootings by the police in recent years have involved people with mental illness.”

Now, the 988 lifeline will connect people to the existing network of more than 200 local crisis call centers around the country. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's 10-digit number — 1-800-273-8255 — will remain active, but calls will be routed to 988.

People who call or text the number will be connected to a trained counselor at a crisis center closest to them. If a local crisis center is too busy to respond right away, the call gets routed to one of 16 backup centers around the country.

Some states and counties are not completely prepared to accommodate this 988 system but non-profit organizations, such as the Council of State Governments are working hard to create templates and workshops to help facilitate preparedness.

Remember, **anyone has the right to access mental help immediately, free of charge**, by calling 988 when living just seems to be overwhelming. To learn more about the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration's 988 resources and information to help spread the word visit: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988>

CSG Offers Leadership and Support to State Governments

The Council of State Governments (CSG) is an organization that Oregon Voices watches closely because it generally takes the lead in assisting states implement public policy programs set forth by national legislation. The CSG website is an excellent place to learn more about this organization and its activities. <https://www.csg.org/work>

CSG is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization in the United States that serves all three branches of state government. Most importantly, it provides quality research support through training

sessions, workshops, and grants to assist state officials implement programs that significantly shape public policy.

This Council recently worked closely with the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) to pull together a group of national organizations involved with criminal justice and behavioral health crisis response to raise awareness about the new lifeline number 988 during a digital “Day of Action” held on Wednesday, July 20, 2022.

It provided the various groups with a promotional toolkit that included suggested language and digital graphics that they could use on their social media and newsletter channels to better inform criminal justice stakeholders about the opportunities of the new 988 dialing code.

Most impressive is the work that the CSG Justice Center is doing in the area of improving reentry success for people exiting prison and for those under supervision. A recent article by Megan Quattlebaum, its Director, gives a comprehensive review of its goals and accomplishments over the past twenty years and it is well worth the read:

<https://csgjusticecenter.org/2022/06/28/celebrating-20-years-of-the-council-of-state-governments-justice-center>

An OV Individual Initiates A Fearless Group in Oregon

David, of Oregon Voices, has successfully started a Fearless group in Oregon and would like you to learn more about it as well as invite you to join if it sounds like something that you would find helpful.

The Fearless group by definition is composed of registrants, parents, spouses, family, both nuclear and extended, and friends who are feeling isolated or want to support or discuss the impact that knowing someone on the registry is having on their lives. In addition, it is a place to network, make new friends, ask for advice, and provide resources such as a lead on housing or employment.

Fearless groups are not therapy groups. Psychological advice is not given and would be inappropriate in this type of setting.

The first Fearless group began in Nebraska and has thrived. There are three active separate groups in NE located in various parts of the state. At this time, about sixty percent of the states that have a NARSOL affiliation also have a Fearless group.

Pre-COVID, the Fearless groups met in person. However, due to the pandemic, the majority of the groups meet via Zoom, including Fearless Oregon.

The Oregon group was started in late winter, 2022, with three people attending. The next two months saw the same population. However, David reports that the group is now averaging ten per meeting with a mix of parents and registrants. In July, guest speaker Ken N. spoke to the group about the history of Oregon Voices and networking with the legislation in Salem, OR.

Fearless Oregon meets the last Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm via Zoom. Everyone is welcome and there is no obligation to attend future meetings. It is a closed meeting and everything said in the meeting is considered confidential.

If anyone has questions or would like further information, you can contact David via the OV email address or phone number found at the end of this newsletter as he would be happy to respond to any inquiries and hopes to see you on Tuesday, August 30, 2022 at 7 pm PDT.

Oregon Receives Much Needed Funding to Help Create Safe Shelters

Oregon is set to receive \$46 million to help with homelessness. This grant comes from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department and is part of more than 2.6 billion dollars to be spent nationally. Local governments and nonprofit organizations competed for the awards. For a detailed list of all of the grants awarded throughout the state, refer to:

https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/FY2021_OR_Press_Report.pdf

Housing Coalition Building in Linn County

Why are homeless offenders, especially youth offenders on the registry, being turned away from shelters and almost any type of available low-income housing in Albany?

This was the question asked by Josiah Blaisdell of the Community Development Commission in Albany when he first contacted Ken Nolley of Oregon Voices in April.

The Albany Community Development Commission was established to review and recommend housing, neighborhood revitalization, and community development programs to the City Council that could be supported with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

Following that conversation a meeting was held in May in Albany Mayor Alex Johnson's office that included Linn County Parole & Probation officers, several Linn County human services agencies, and three Oregon Voices Board members. The City of Albany has recently received \$1m in grant funding from the State of Oregon to develop affordable housing and is exploring various housing development opportunities to address homelessness.

At this meeting Oregon Voices representatives shared recidivism studies citing consistently low recidivism rates for registered citizens and the unnecessary barriers that continue to exist to successfully reentering their communities for those with previous sex offenses. There was a consensus of those present that stable, affordable housing ensures the safety of the community for everyone and that any housing funds received by the State of Oregon or public-private partnerships to develop new affordable housing in Albany and Linn County must also be available to those with previous sex offenses. This group plans to stay connected to ensure that the project moves forward. Albany's Mayor Johnson is energized about this project and will collaborate with other mayors in Oregon to establish a model for addressing the full scale of homeless needs that impact all counties in Oregon. These ongoing efforts will also address the interrelation of employment, education, and housing needs to ensure success for individuals returning to society.

The OV Legislative Committee Needs You!

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere...” Martin Luther King, Jr., 16 Apr 1963

When Oregon Voices was founded, we made a calculated decision to focus on State legislation. We found that our federal representatives were unresponsive and working with the Oregon legislature made possible progress like the risk-based scoring of registrants and a path off the registry.

In the last years, we have watched restrictions on social issues and on individual liberties tighten at the federal level in all three branches of government. The Supreme Court is certainly an example as is the Department of Justice with the new SORNA regulations and Congress’ tightening and extending of International Megan’s Law.

Your Oregon Voices Legislative Committee needs your help to stem the tide. To date we have been able to hold back repressive state sex offense legislation. This year in September we will not only be formulating our response to proposed legislation but will attempt for the first time to take a proactive stance by proposing bills. Each member receiving this newsletter can have a place in the process. YES, THAT MEANS YOU! Given federal pressure on states to tighten restrictions, we no longer have the luxury of waiting.

What can you do to help? Contact Pam or Scott via the OV email address or phone number located at the end of this newsletter and volunteer to attend our first meeting in September. You already have the time and skills to make this happen.

“...We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” Martin Luther King

PSJ Takes The Lead in Advocating For Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform

During the past twenty years, Partnership for Safety and Justice (PSJ) has been a leader in Oregon for effectively creating legislation that became law. PSJ encourages people who are “justice involved, crime survivors and the families and communities of both” to become part of this group to work for better public policy as well as for criminal justice system reform.

Recent legislation includes the passage of:

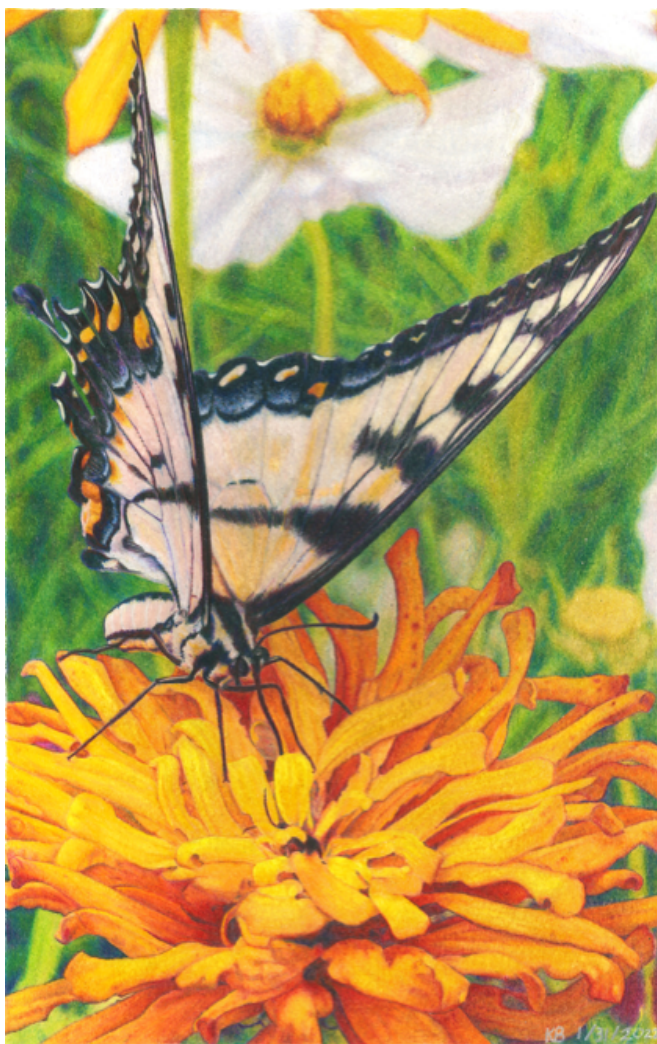
SB 620, eliminating fees for post-prison supervision, probation and parole,
SB 755, clarifying and strengthening Measure 110, which decriminalizes small amounts of drugs and invest in treatment programs,
HB 2204, launching new grant-supported Restorative Justice programs, and
HB 5006, containing over \$25 million in funding for four public safety programs.

The PSJ website is a good place for you to start learning about this organization and the extensive work it does to positively impact the lives of many Oregonians:

<https://safetyandjustice.org>

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Oregon Voices thanks the artist-in-residence (housed on the inside) who contributed this phenomenal piece of artwork:



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly

Call for Submissions:

The newsletter is soliciting contributions of artwork, poetry, or short pieces up to 250 words for inclusion in future newsletters. You don't have to be an AIC in Oregon. Remember that some Oregon AICs are housed out of state in military detention facilities or federal prisons. Your artistic contributions are also welcome. We reserve the right to edit pieces to fit the constraints of the newsletter, and when possible, we will consult with authors about proposed changes. We would like to continue to feature the voices of our readers who are on the inside.

Insiders Corner (cont'd)

Colette Peters, Director of Oregon's Prison System Moves On

Last month, the Justice Department, selected Colette Peters, the director of Oregon's prison system, to run the Federal Bureau of Prisons. She will officially begin her new assignment on August 2. At this point in time, it is not known who will be named the new director of Oregon's Prison system. Let's hope for the best.

CSG Justice Center Committed to Improving Reentry Success

The CSG Justice Center, mentioned previously in this newsletter, produces a news bulletin called *The State of Justice*. A recent article, "Incarcerated People Face Barriers to Reentry Post Prison. How One Initiative Aims To Help," dated May 24, 2022 and edited by Bremma Callahan, points out that over 600,000 people are released from federal and state prisons every year.

Unfortunately, many of those cycle in and out of jails because there are so many barriers to face, as they are often prevented access to employment, housing and education. As a result, a new national initiative has been established to improve the process of reentry by reducing those barriers. This initiative, called Reentry 2030 is a collaboration between three groups: the CSG Justice Center, the Correctional Leaders Association and the advocacy group, Just Leadership USA.

Again, the vision of Reentry 2030 is to improve reentry success for people exiting prison and those under supervision. For the specifics of this initiative visit the CSG website (Justice Center News):

<https://csgjusticecenter.org/2022/04/25/national-initiative-aims-to-improve-reentry-outcomes-by-2030>

Governor Brown Faces Criticism For Granting Commutations

Governor Brown has been facing criticism from victims and victims' families for granting around a thousand commutations during the past two years. As a result, in July, Governor Brown appointed Karuna Thompson to serve as a liaison to crime victims and their families in cases under consideration for clemency. She is a longtime chaplain at the Oregon State Penitentiary.

For the full story visit: https://www.wenatcheeworld.com/oregon-governor-appears-to-bow-to-criticism-creates-new-post-to-inform-crime-victims-of/article_3874c33a-fbcf-11ec-b0a3-3fa5f7eea511.html

FAMM Advocates Call Attention to Prison Conditions

Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM) is encouraging each of us to urge our state and federal representatives to "visit a prison" so that they can personally experience what it is like and become more aware of the need to address correctional issues. You can participate directly by going to the FAMM link:

<https://famm.org/wp-content/uploads/FAMM-VAP-Family-Guide.pdf>

U.S. Marshals Conduct “Sweeps” in Oregon

The U.S. Marshals Service recently collaborated with partner agencies in both Eugene and Bend, to investigate and pursue non-complaint offenders, placing the highest priority on those who have committed violent acts and crimes against children. Rather than dwell on the negativity of this activity, Oregon Voices encourages you to [REGISTER](#) and stay compliant.

Oregon CURE (Citizens United For Rehabilitation of Errants) Offers A New Opportunity for Those Wanting to Attend Their Monthly Meetings

Several individuals who subscribe to Oregon Voices also belong to one of the four CURE chapters in the state. Monthly meetings for adult family members and friends of the incarcerated take place at Salem, Eugene, Beaverton, and NE Portland.

Presently, the Beaverton support group will share its time slot with folks throughout the state via Zoom. Email us at: oregoncure@gmail.com if you are interested in joining the Zoom meeting which will be held the first Wednesday evening of the month at 7 p.m. It will last roughly 90 minutes. The Eugene, Salem and NE Portland groups will most likely be meeting in person so if they are your favorites, please continue to support and attend them. Go to the CURE website to access information about meeting times as well as a list of contacts and phone numbers for each of these three meeting areas.

Have Questions? Need Information? Check Out the Oregon Voices Website!

Remember to visit the OV Website as it contains a wealth of information. The home page features a column on the right-hand side that gives information about current issues and events. Contact information is provided if you have some news items that you wish to contribute.
www.oregonvoices.org

Last, But Not Least

Oregon Voices is committed to working with other organizations within our state that share a common goal of creating better support for our registered citizens and their families. We invite you to join us in our efforts. Help is always needed to work on such issues as housing, employment, education, legal resources, the website, legislation and the OV newsletter. If you would like more information about Oregon Voices or wish to volunteer in some capacity, please call 971-317-6868, or email: info@oregonvoices.org

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