

Oregon Voices News

News from Oregon that you can use

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.

Our legislative team has worked tirelessly to keep up with bills that have been introduced during this legislative session. Members of the team have notified us when it was important to advocate for the defeat of bills that, if enacted, would put Registered Citizens in harm's way. They also alerted us when we needed to actively support the passage of others. OV collaborated with Oregon's Partnership for Safety and Justice (PSJ) as they worked hard to pass legislation to provide help for those who are suffering from mental illness or substance abuse, as well as to advocate for prison reform, and improved reentry programs.

This newsletter highlights some of this legislation as well as information about other events that have brought about positive change.

Oregon Voices Holds General Meeting Earlier This Month

Four individuals new to Oregon Voices attended our last meeting and time was spent welcoming them and answering their questions. Guest speakers Paul and Cheryl E. shared information about the history of Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), a non-profit organization. They passed out brochures that highlighted the concerns and goals of the Oregon Chapter. Paul mentioned that Oregon is the only state that actually has support groups and these are located in Eugene, Beaverton, Salem, and Damascus. They participate in the Beaverton Support Group, which is the only one that meets via Zoom. This has been very successful because they have been able to reach out and give support to others throughout the state. It may also lead up to the possibility of beginning support groups in Pendleton, Bend and Ontario. Paul reiterated that CURE is here to "help support you on the outside while you are on the inside." For a wealth of information, visit the website: www.oregoncure.org

Also look for a Handbook for Friends and Adults in Custody that was created by the Department of Corrections in partnership with Oregon CURE.

<https://www.oregon.gov/doc/Documents/friends-and-family-handbook-2021.pdf>

2023 Legislature—Mid-Term Report

This year, a large group of OV volunteers has been following bills in the current session. Several bills were submitted that concerned us initially, all of them initiated in the wake of a case covered extensively and often sensationally in the press. Two separate bills would have extended the statute of limitations on first-degree sex crimes, one would have allowed victims to appeal risk classification levels form registrants, and one would have redefined and broadened the definition of victim of a sex crime. But none of these regressive bills got a hearing in both houses, and all died quietly.

There were no bills making positive changes for registrants, but a number of bills were proposed that would institute positive reforms, and none of them excluded persons with sex crimes. May 19 was the deadline for bills to move out of the chamber of their origin. If house bills didn't move out the house, and senate bills didn't move out of the senate by then, they are dead. Presently, the Republican walkout has been holding everything up. and the 2023 Oregon State Legislative Session ends on June 25.

Please note that these are the bills that the OV Legislative Team is following, and, if, at the last moment before publication of this newsletter, there is more information available, "notes" will be added.

SB 270, if passed, would allow DOC to establish educational programs in cooperation with community colleges to be offered remotely to AICs. The bill passed the Senate by a wide margin and at this writing is before the House Committee on Higher Education.

SB 520 would establish an early medical release program. This bill is still in the Senate Ways and Means Committee and will only pass if state revenue projections are favorable.

Note: *This bill never made it out of Ways and Means, so it is now dead.*

SB 529 would mandate the establishment of treatment programs for AICs that deal with addiction as a health issue. The bill has passed the Senate, by a wide margin and, as of this writing, it is in the House having received a DO PASS recommendation from the House Judiciary Committee. **Note:** *Just before publication of this newsletter the Governor signed this bill enacting it into law! See "Breaking News"!*

The following article in this newsletter discusses ways that OV works cooperatively with Partnership for Safety and Justice. We also work with other groups who advocate for evidence-based practices, including CURE and the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (OCDLA). And several Oregon Voices members recently had a conference call with representatives of the Oregon ACLU to explore ways that we might work together more effectively to support registered persons in reentry. Eventually, we hope to focus some of that cooperative work on expanding access to relief from registration in Oregon.

PSJ Lobbying Day, April 19, 2023

In addition to the process that Oregon Voices uses to track and respond to legislation, many of us are involved with other groups that are also working on justice issues. These

organizations, like Partnership for Safety and Justice, CURE, and the ACLU are working on other aspects of this issue, but there is much overlap.

One example is the Partnership for Safety and Justice recent lobbying day. They focus on several bills and constituents visit their Representative and Senator in Salem and advocate for those bills. The bills are not targeted on our specific issues, but deal broadly with sentencing and reentry.

This year, among others, they chose SB (Senate Bill) 580, which our legislative group is also following. If passed, it will expand earned discharge for people on community supervision who are meeting their supervision goals. They also advocated for renewing justice reinvestment, something that sunsets this year. PSJ was instrumental in passing that ten years ago and it has resulted in flat-lining prison growth, including closing two prisons, and investment in community based programs.

PSJ advocates for both accountability and healing. They work with perpetrators and victims. See their website for more information: <https://safetyandjustice.org/ourteam/>

A Legislative Victory!

One of the OV Legislative Team members notified us that our Governor signed SB529 on May 19! It requires that an intensive alternative incarceration addiction program address addiction as a chronic disease. It will provide alternative incarceration addiction programs that should include a range of treatment services. It modifies participant acceptance procedures and participation requirements for programs. Mostly addressing folks with substance use disorders (SUDs), this may only affect a very small number of persons with sex crime convictions, but it is a move in the right direction! Finally DOC will be required to start offering real treatment programs!

Some More Good News!

Tera Hurst, Executive Director of Health Justice Recovery Alliance, sent out some exciting news on funding for Measure 110 services. On Wednesday, May 17, the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis announced that nearly \$40 million dollars will be moved to the Measure 110 services fund to help pay for vital addiction recovery services. She states that these dollars are the result of direct savings from within the criminal system due to no longer criminalizing addiction.

Thanks to Oregon's commitment to invest in and prioritize services upstream, Measure 110 will continue to be funded at its current level. Ms. Hurst stated, **“We are finally building out a system of care where our loved ones struggling with addiction can get the help they need.”** She further commented that addiction recovery service providers will be able to hire more outreach workers to connect people with services, purchase more recovery housing, continue expanding peer mentor programs, increase access to low-barrier treatment, and provide more lifesaving overdose prevention and harm reduction services.

“Treating addiction as a health issue is more effective in getting people help and it costs significantly less than criminalizing them for a health issue,” explained Ms. Hurst. “It costs as much as \$35,000 per person per year to criminalize someone in a misdemeanor drug case, and \$9,000 on average to provide that same person with evidence-based treatment that may very well save their life.”

Examples were given as to how these funds would greatly improve the services of various facilities, including Fresh Out, a community based reentry and Bridges to Change.

Fresh Out, based in Multnomah County, works with incarcerated individuals while they are still in prison, building relationships to help them envision a hopeful future for themselves and learn how to access the tools to help them be successful after release. Immediately upon their release, Fresh Out continues to work with them, providing peer support and vital financial assistance. These interventions have been proven to reduce return to drug relapse and return to criminal activity.

Bridges to Change is a recovery access center in Gresham that is starting to come together to provide rapid access services for people battling addiction. For more information about other programs, go to: info@healthjusticerecovery.org

Legislative Activity in Washington State

OV Board members received some good news from Joanne S. of Washington Voices who informed us that ESHB 1394 became law and will into effect on July 1 of this year. This might not seem big to other states but it is a big win in Washington. Currently, the laws require all juveniles adjudicated for a sex offense to be on the sex offense registry. And they must remain on the registry until they successfully petition a superior court to get off, a complex, expensive process. Consequently, many stay on for life.

ESHB 1394 acknowledges that the sex offense registry does not increase public safety; instead, it causes harm to those individuals who must register and to their families. Further, it recognizes that once an intervention occurs and treatment is provided, individuals rarely commit another sex offense. Starting in June, the only youth who must register are those convicted of a serious violent sex offense which is relatively rare; those who are adjudicated for a second subsequent sex offense which is even more rare; and those who refuse to follow their conditions of community supervision which is typically two years and includes treatment. In addition, the requirement to register will be extinguished after three years for any individual who must register for a juvenile offense in the future or in the past. This will result in at least 3000 individuals being removed from the registry by Dec. 1, 2023.

Note: There is an active effort in Oregon to amend ORS 163A.125 to ease juvenile registration requirements. By requiring registration, the burdens placed on these youth far outweigh the benefits to the public and misdirects public resources.

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The Insiders Corner is a special section devoted to featuring contributions from AICs. This includes 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. Oregon Voices also features articles in this section of the newsletter that AICs might find of particular interest.



Oregon Voices thanks the artist-in-residence (housed on the inside) who contributed yet another phenomenal piece of artwork.

A Bill to Provide Treatment for Mental Illness and Substance Abuse On the Inside

Dave Miller, on NPR's Talk Out Loud, recently discussed HB2890 with Emily Green, who is the Managing Editor of Lund Report.

Maxine Dexter (D) introduced this bill in Oregon's House of Representatives from Portland out of concern that many people in Oregon's prisons suffer from mental illness or substance abuse disorder. There is often no existing treatment or it is very hard to get. In the year 2022, 4,000 people were released from Oregon prisons and 2/3 of them went into the prison system suffering from substance abuse. 80% were released without ever getting it.

Emily pointed out that there are twelve state prisons in Oregon and only four have treatment programs for addiction and those are very small. The demand is great. Two-

thirds of state prisoners suffer from substance abuse, which equates to 8,000 prisoners that could benefit from treatment programs.

Mental health programs are a bit more developed. 62% of prisoners would benefit; however, only 42% get services. Those who are serving life sentences are not eligible; however, those who are getting close to release dates really do need access to them. There have been studies done that show those who have received the treatment that they need prior to release are less likely to re-offend.

It cost the state \$50,000 a year to house a prisoner and 80% of those released did not receive much needed substance abuse or mental health treatment while in prison. Statistically, more than half of the prisoners released in Oregon will be arrested again because they never received the treatment and counseling that could have help them fight addiction and change their lives. Funding for treatment versus the cost of housing a prisoner makes sense.

David commented that people, upon entering prisons, have no choice but to go “cold turkey” in order to “get clean” but that is really not the case. In reality, prisoners with light sentences could benefit from treatment because drugs are so available and overdoses do occur. There were four deaths last year.

HB2890 requires the Department of Corrections to make mental health and substance abuse treatment available to all prisoners throughout their incarceration. The projected cost would be around 23.4 million dollars ever two years. There is bi-partisan support for this bill. Included is support for an independent Ombudsman office to deal with prisoners’ concerns. Legislation created funding for an Ombudsman in the 1970s; however, adequate funding has never been received in order to make it functional.

In the past, SB529 provided treatment for only 18%; yet, more than 2,000 prisoners needed it. President Biden has declared that all federal prisons have to have access to medication treatment.

Update: *Unfortunately, this bill got stuck in Ways and Means and didn't have a chance to move forward before the deadline; however, it received unanimous support in the House Judiciary so there is hope that this will be one of the first bills to resurface during the 2024 short legislative session. Let's be ready to advocate for its passage at that time.*

Giving AICs A Second Chance

Oregon’s Supreme Court determined that people accused of crimes by split-jury verdicts must be given a new look, in other words, a second chance, a retrial. While this ruling is good news, there are obstacles that both lawyers and clients face. For hundreds of Oregon AICs, the decision means prosecutors must now decide whether to pursue a new trial, cut a plea deal or dismiss charges altogether.

A recent interview, on NPR's All Things Considered, with Aliza Kaplan, Director of the Criminal Justice Clinic at Lewis & Clark, exposed the challenges that both lawyers and clients face. Go to the following link to listen to the entire interview.

<https://www.npr.org/2023/05/14/1175226037/supreme-court-ramos-louisiana-split-juries-oregon>

Calling Attention to Miscellaneous Articles and Interviews

“How Inflation Is Hitting Prison Inmates”

May 16, 2023 Heard on NPR's All Things Considered

This interview points out an alarming increase in the cost of basic hygiene products such as toothpaste as well as for food items such as peanut butter that people serving prison sentences have to pay or go without. The Marshall Project collected the data nationwide.

<https://www.npr.org/2023/05/16/1176506767/how-inflation-is-hitting-prison-inmates>

“Pell Grant Will Return for Oregon State Inmates Seeking Post-Secondary Education”

Published May 12, 2023 – KLCC

This is good news! Oregon will soon be able to funnel federal funding to allow state AICs to take courses organized by Oregon colleges. At present, there have been college courses available through Chemeketa and Treasure Valley Community Colleges but AICs were excluded from applying for Pell Grants. While Oregon's community colleges have a long history of involvement with local correctional facilities, the new Pell Grant program will allow even more colleges to establish and expand their educational courses and provide crucial funding opportunities to AICs who otherwise might have been left behind. This sounds encouraging and let's hope that this is one federally funded program that won't take forever to become a reality.

<https://www.klcc.org/education/2023-05-12/pell-grant-will-return-for-oregon-state-inmates-seeking-post-secondary-education>

OV Pays Tribute to Paul Solomon, of Sponsors

Oregon Voices joins many other groups in thanking Paul Solomon for his dedicated service and leadership in building Sponsors into what it is today. Sponsors was founded in 1973 to help offer second chances to individuals releasing from prison. Today, Sponsors has 20 buildings on 7 sites including 119 beds of transitional housing and 124 units of permanent housing. This year, Sponsors will celebrate 50 years of reimagining justice in Lane County.

Paul has been a staunch supporter of Oregon Voices and, in the past, has driven up the freeway to Oregon City to give a presentation at one of our general meetings. He has also given us space to hold an OV meeting in Eugene where we presented the Relief from the Registry Flow Chart. Several folks who belong to OV are also members of the Eugene CURE Chapter and donate many hours of their time serving Sponsors in some capacity.

Paul is transitioning from his longtime role of Executive Director to that of a Senior Advisor. In a recent newsletter, he announced that Morgan Jaco has been hired to serve at the helm of Sponsors. We are committed to support her as she moves forward.

If you are an AIC from Lane County and would like to go through the transition program offered by Sponsors upon reentry, please visit the website or contact OV via the email address listed at the end of this newsletter. www.sponsorsinc.org

During this legislative session, Sponsors has joined OV, CURE, and PSJ as they advocate for laws in support of AICs and those who have reentered their communities. Paul states the following in one of the latest Sponsor's newsletters, "We will continue our efforts to increase equitable access to expungement through automation of the records clearance process. We will support the restoration of voting rights for Oregonians in state prison and we will advocate to fully fund the Justice Reinvestment and Restorative Justice programs." Paul also notes that Sponsors will work to expand "earned leave".

Eugene Author Lauren Kessler Wins Oregon Book Award

Eugene author Lauren Kessler recently won an Oregon Book Award for "Free: Two Years, Six Lives, and the Long Journey Home." Kessler's book was announced as the winner of the Frances Fuller Victor Award for general nonfiction at a ceremony in Portland hosted by Literary Arts that honored this year's Oregon Book Awards winners.

"Free: Two Years, Six Lives, and the Long Journey Home" shares the many challenges of six people reentering society after being incarcerated. Kessler discusses institutionalized obstacles, the lack of resources and social stigmas facing them. She has written 11 narrative nonfiction books, including her most recent award-winning title. This is a book that provides insight to what any AIC faces upon reentry.

Kessler was recently invited to discuss her book with the Eugene chapter of Oregon CURE and we hope to invite her to one of our future OV General meetings.

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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