

# 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. We continue to support the efforts of other organizations that are also striving to make lives better for AICs and those reentering our communities.

The focus of this newsletter is to share how OV got its start and how it has evolved over the years; yet, it has not strayed from its original goals. This edition also highlights some positive strides made during the 2023 Oregon Legislative Session as well as includes the latest data related to those seeking relief from the registry. It also contains other news and events that indicate positive support for RCs, AICs, and others!

### **The Creation of Oregon Voices and How It Has Evolved**

In 2009, two moms, both overwhelmed by their son's arrests for alleged sex offenses, found each other and cried together. And that was the beginning of what became Oregon Voices. That was also the beginning of what is still one important aspect of OV - mutual support and knowing you are not alone.

Slowly other parents, as well as registrants, came together, meeting at various homes. One of the founding moms was an attorney. Since we were a small group, she suggested that we could have the most impact by focusing on legislation as the biggest potential vehicle for change. She helped us with contacts and we learned about lobbying.

Then in the 2011 legislative session, two potentially life-changing bills were introduced. One would have set up 1000-foot residency restrictions, and the other would have put all registrants online. We testified and others joined us. And the bills did not make it out of committee. But what emerged was an Interim Work Group to examine Oregon sex offense laws.

That committee had all the players - police, sheriffs, defense attorneys, DAs, treatment providers, parole and probation and yes, even OV had a small seat at the table. But the majority knew that sex offense was not a one-size-fits-all category. And, what emerged was a bill that set up risk levels rather than using the SORNA tiers based on crime. And it provided a path off the registry. Passing it was an exercise in legislative horse-trading, including a number of changes inserted by the DAs. But it did pass in the last hour of the session and was signed by the governor. And there was an OV member on the implementation committee.

But the process of implementing it has been glacially slow. Our efforts turned to adding new data that showed almost no risk after 20 years of being offense-free. But progress stalled as change is politically risky and legislators all come up for reelection. Then came Covid and momentum slowed. We are gradually reconnecting with legislators and are increasingly working with other organizations on bills that help all AICs, with peripheral help for registrants. We hope to improve the path off the registry in the next major session.

And how has OV evolved? We have quarterly meetings, now again in person, in the Portland area. We do a quarterly newsletter that we send out to our email listserv and to AICs who request a copy. We have a website to provide information and a phone number to call with questions. We will soon have a handbook to help those seeking registry relief. And in the last session, we had a larger group of people working on identifying legislative bills that need letters or testimony. One Board member is working on identifying housing and employment resources. We are an affiliate of NARSOL (The National Association for Rational Sex Offense Laws) which supports change state-by-state and nationally.

And how do we want to evolve in the future? We hope to grow the number of people who will be able to volunteer to serve on the legislation team, offer individual support, and educate the general public. We hope to work with other organizations, particularly Partnership for Safety and Justice and the ACLU, and to connect with others, on legislation and legal action. And we hope to use technology to expand. Long story short, increasing numbers will mean increased change.

## **2023 Legislative Report**

The OV Legislative Committee closely followed 11 House bills and 21 Senate bills and worked in connection with partners on criminal justice reform issues. It is still difficult to get new bills passed on sex offense issues specifically, but by working with others, OV can get bills passed that help Registered Citizens along with other people.

Oregon Voices strongly opposed 7 bills and, fortunately, none made it out of committee. Of the thirteen bills that we did support, five passed, including especially:  
 HB 2107 which will allow AICs to register to vote;  
 HB 2320 that sets up a Juvenile Justice Policy Commission;  
 SB 270 that will allow AICs to take higher education classes; and  
 SB 581 that extends earned reduction of supervision time to persons whose convictions came before 2021. For more information about these bills enacted into law, visit the Oregon Legislature Information System (OLIS) website:  
<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023I1>

One major long-range goal we have is to get Oregon to recognize the data that shows how risk of re-offense declines predictably with time spent offense-free in the community.

If we can get that recognized, we might be able to speed up the relief process greatly and make it more easily available at the same time.

### **Data on Relief and Reclassification Hearings:**

So far this year, there have been 70 relief hearings and 10 reclassification hearings. There were 15 denials, and there may still be one or two pending decisions. Four of the last seven denials were from failure to appear. It appears that we are still pretty much on track for 80% success rates, and anecdotally we keep hearing that a significant number of negative decisions come from people who don't follow through, either with a complete file or through failure to appear.

### **Oregon Voices Holds Recent Meeting In Oregon City**

We have returned to holding in-person quarterly meetings and recently met at Hilltop in Oregon City where we enjoyed learning about the wealth of knowledge available on the Oregon Voices website. Board members took turns talking about the vast amount of information that is available and were surprised to discover that several in attendance had never visited the website. OV is fortunate to have two individuals who are dedicated to keeping the website functioning and the information current.

It also became evident that many who were present didn't understand how Oregon's leveling/classification system works or how to utilize the Relief From Registration Flowchart. OV board members encouraged people to visit the website often and also realized that we need to plan more educational workshops.

[www.oregonvoices.org](http://www.oregonvoices.org)

### **Relief From the Registry Handbook**

The Handbook is presently going through the final editing process. When completed, it will serve as a very valuable tool if and when a Registered Citizen (RC) chooses to apply for a relief hearing. The handbook should address everything that one must know to be well prepared. Keep tuned as those who have gone through the process of seeking relief from the registry have advocated for such a resource and have contributed their own helpful advice.

### **NARSOL - - What is it and How Can it Serve You?**

The National Association for Rational Sex Offence Laws (NARSOL) is a not-for-profit organization that is operated by volunteers whose goal is to bring change to the oppressive sex offense laws in the United States. It got its start in the late 1990s. Check it out at: <https://www.narsol.org/>

The website contains a wealth of information, such as the latest news about national and international travel restrictions, passport requirements, and legal actions, as well as a thorough list of partner organizations.

One of the most interesting resources found on this website is “The Digest”, a quarterly publication that centers around "the expansion of public registries in the United States." It contains up-to-date news submitted by affiliates in individual states and it is good to know that previous editions have been archived. In addition to accessing “The Digest” online, a print edition goes out to over a thousand paid subscribers, many of whom are incarcerated in state and federal prisons for sexually based offenses.

Are you thinking of travelling? OV board members are very much aware that many RCs do not understand that when they travel they are subject to the laws enacted by each state as related to those on the registry. For example, do you know how many days you can be in a state before having to register, or how long you will remain on that registry? OV knows of an RC in Oregon who went to spend a few days of vacation in Florida and ended up on that state’s registry for life! **Know before you go!**

Besides obtaining information about travel restrictions on the NARSOL website, you can also find more advice related to international travel on the ACSOL website. The “International Travel 2023” list of restrictions has recently been posted as well as stories from those who have travelled and want to share their experiences.

<https://all4consolaws.org/2023/01/international-travel-2023/>

## **What Do You Know About SORNA?**

When Congress passed the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) in 2006, it gave the Attorney General unrestrained authority to create new registration requirements. Since that time OV and other organizations have been challenged to find out exactly how it impacts Oregon’s registered citizens. SORNA, at present, is being legally contested because it overrides the laws created in each state regarding who is posted on its own registry.

To learn more, visit the Alliance for Constitutional Sex Offense Laws (ACSOL) website and read the following posts:

### ***Lawsuit Filed Challenging SORNA Regulations***

<https://all4consolaws.org/2022/05/lawsuit-filed-challenging-sorna-regulations/>

### ***CA: Federal Court Denies Government’s Motion to Dismiss SORNA Claims***

<https://all4consolaws.org/2023/07/ca-federal-court-denies-governments-motion-to-dismiss-sorna-claims/>

In past newsletters, artwork from an AIC has been included. This time around, OV is proud to highlight the photography of one of its registered citizens and strongest supporters.



*A Dewdrop of Hope*

*Dan*

Dan has shown us several photos that he has taken and is in the process of experimenting with different settings and cameras. It definitely shows that pursuing a hobby is very rewarding.

If you are an Adult In Custody (AIC) or a Registered Citizen (RC) and would like to share a poem, a story, a drawing or a photo for the newsletter please contact us via the phone number or email address found at the end of this newsletter.



*Seeds Ready to Start New Life*

*Dan*

*“Keep your face always toward the sunshine and shadows will fall behind you.”* Walt Whitman

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## The Second Chance Act, Its Expansion, and Related Federal Grants

The Second Chance Act was signed into law on April 9, 2008 and reauthorized in 2018. It authorizes federal grants for vital programs and systems reform aimed at improving the reentry process. In April of 2022, The Biden-Harris administration expanded second chance opportunities for formerly incarcerated persons. It is the President's belief that America needs to offer meaningful opportunities for redemption and rehabilitation. This, in turn, can lead toward positive contributions to their communities and also reduce recidivism.

The National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC) recently published an updated list of Reentry Grants that have been awarded to various organizations and institutions within each state. The following link will give you access to the **Reentry Grants State Profile** for Oregon: <https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/NRRC-State-Reentry-Supports-Oregon.pdf>

Oregon's profile provides information about Second Chance Act grantees, including the organization's name, contact person, geographical jurisdiction, grant terms, and the assigned technical assistance provider. Other information includes a list of reentry organizations in Oregon that receive other federal grants. This is also a good source for keeping up-to-date about reentry legislative initiatives and any new State-based reentry services. Included is information about Oregon's legal system that impacts Juvenile Justice. Lastly, note a link to Oregon's online reentry services directory.

This Oregon Profile can show individuals, upon reentry, what grants have been awarded to places within their respective communities and can also provide valuable information about where to find support when adjusting to life on the outside.

## The Lionheart Foundation

The Lionheart Foundation, established in 1992, is a nonprofit organization committed to creating high impact, evidence based, social emotional learning curricula to empower prisoners, youth at risk, teenage parents, and direct care staff.

This nonprofit organization has donated over 140,000 resource materials to those who otherwise would not have had access. Lionheart's educational programming has been integrated into thousands of prisons, juvenile institutions, social service agencies, schools, and community programs throughout the United States.

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### *Insiders' corner (cont'd)*

Lionheart states on its webpage, “At the core of everything we do is the belief that all human life has value, inherent worth, dignity, and resiliency.”

They have created a reentry resource list for Oregon that is quite comprehensive and too long to include in this newsletter; however, you can download it from the following link: [https://lionheart.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OREGON\\_Reentry\\_List.pdf](https://lionheart.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OREGON_Reentry_List.pdf)

While not every group on this reentry resource list includes assistance for Registered Citizens, there are several that do.

### **Oregon CURE Offers Valuable Resources**

If you haven't already visited the Oregon CURE website, it is well worth your time. You can find valuable information about how you can help loved ones on the inside. Especially noteworthy is the creation and publication of an exceptional handbook for friends and families of AICs. OV discussed this handbook in an earlier newsletter; however, it is well worth mentioning again. CURE worked in collaboration with DOC to develop this resource in order to introduce you to the Oregon State Department of Corrections (DOC) and to provide answers to the multitude of questions you might have.

You can find “Handbook for Friends and Family of Adults in Custody” on the DOC webpage: <https://www.oregon.gov/doc/Documents/friends-and-family-handbook-2023.pdf>

CURE also sends their newsletters to AICs so, if interested, please visit their website to find out further information: <https://oregoncure.org/>

### **Free On The Outside: “Restoring Hope, Rebuilding Lives”**

One of the stories that OV often hears from people released from prison and re-entering society is that they don't know about all the resources available to assist them in getting a fresh start. More often than not, an individual who is labeled a sex offender (registered citizen) has an even more difficult time.

Oregon Voices will continue to provide information about organizations within our various communities that offer services for formerly incarcerated individuals inclusive of registered citizens. Such a group is Free On The Outside, an adult-only church that offers mentoring and support services for men and women re-entering the community in the Portland area. Since 2018, Free On The Outside has acquired 21 homes and has been able to provide 200 beds to formerly incarcerated individuals. Visit their website at: <https://www.freeontheoutside.org/> or contact Mike, the director, pastor, and housing coordinator: [mikec@freeontheoutside.org](mailto:mikec@freeontheoutside.org)

## What is the Oregon Second Chance Tour?

OV continues to learn about new efforts in Oregon to improve opportunities for employment of people with criminal records. One that OV recently learned about is The Second Chance Tour, an initiative of the Oregon Governor's Reentry Council Business Implementation Team. According to The Tour's website, workshops have been developed to engage Oregon employers about Second Chance Employment – "the successful employment of people with criminal records."

These workshops will highlight the work of many groups such as local chambers of commerce, workforce development boards, government agencies, and other community organizations and will serve as a launch pad for others. Workshops include employers' perspectives, employment pipeline, community benefits, employer incentives, and best practices. For more information, do an online search for [Oregon Second Chance Tour](#).

## Knocking Down Barriers – Opportunity Oregon

A recent article appearing in the "Eugene Weekly" tells about another individual who has stepped forward to connect formerly incarcerated people with jobs. Nancy founded "Opportunity Oregon", a non-profit "dedicated to identifying prisoners about to be released who have gone through reintegration training and pairing them up with employers as job openings arise." <https://eugeneweekly.com/2023/06/01/knocking-down-barriers/>

## 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](mailto:info@oregonvoices.org)

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