

# 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.

Farewell to 2023 and hello to 2024! OV has always focused on efforts to identify housing, employment, and education opportunities for registered citizens and what better time than right now for us to reflect on what we have accomplished and to also recognize how much more we need to do. Without family and/or community support systems, it is not uncommon for individuals to end up on the streets. And, as the numbers of homeless continue to grow, Oregon Voices recognizes the importance of working with other non-profit groups when advocating for the creation and passage of bills that make lives better for many of our disadvantaged citizens.

## **New Year's Eve Resolution #1 Growing Numbers of Those in Oregon Voices**

We would really like to grow the numbers of those in Oregon Voices. There are over 30,000 on the sex offender registry and we have had contact with, at most, a couple of hundred. There are other affiliates of the National Association for Rational Sex Offense Laws (NARSOL) who have been more successful at getting more widespread involvement. But, and this is a big but, everyone on the registry in most states is online and their names and addresses are accessible.

As you know, thankfully, that is not true in Oregon. Although it can be very difficult to find housing and employment, it is more possible here to actually have a more normal life. It also means that registrants can fly below the radar a bit and they may not want to be publicly connected with our mission. The upshot for OV is that it is very hard to get people involved to deal with legislation and support for those who are trying to navigate this labyrinth.

We are going to take a hard look at what we can do to recruit more help and would value any ideas you have. And if you have contacts with people who could use support or could help, we would love to hear. Remember, you can remain anonymous while participating in OV work if you are concerned about identity issues. If you have any hesitation or questions you would like answered, please feel free to contact us at 971-317-6868 or send an email to: [info@oregonvoices.org](mailto:info@oregonvoices.org)

## **New Year's Resolution #2**

### **Publication and Distribution of the Relief From The Registry Handbook**

First of all, OV wants to get the registry relief handbook out and it is in the publication stage.

Then we want to disseminate the new handbook as widely as possible. That means, of course, getting it to as many registrants as possible and we do not yet know how best to do that. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

But it may also mean gathering information on who should access the handbook. Probation officers and treatment providers, for instance, sometimes give inaccurate information about registry relief. This is not surprising as it is a very complex system and sometimes hard to decipher. The new handbook runs to over 20 pages, just to illustrate the complexity. Again, thoughts on who would benefit and who could volunteer to distribute this important document are welcomed, as they are very much needed.

## **New Year's Resolution #3**

### **Getting to Know Our Legislators**

We need to have more contact with legislators. In our early days, we established lots of contacts and that was part of what made the Level System and registry relief possible. But Covid and new legislators mean we now have fewer contacts. And these are vital both to support possible new legislation to simplify the relief process and to provide letters and testimony on any bills that threaten our progress to date.

Oregon has biennial legislative sessions; a short session one year followed by a full session the next. This year happens to be a short session lasting only 35 days with a full session beginning in January 2025. Short sessions do not generally produce many new bills, but what is happening needs to be monitored and perhaps responded to. Please read the fuller explanation of this legislative session that also appears in this newsletter. Again, any thoughts on how you can assist us in accomplishing our resolutions, please email us at: [info@oregonvoices.org](mailto:info@oregonvoices.org)

## The 2024 Oregon Legislative Session Is About To Convene

The 2024 Oregon legislative session is short, beginning on February 5 and ending on March 15. In even-numbered years, the sessions are limited by law to 35 days, so there are stringent time limits on how many measures the legislature can address.

This means that it will be difficult to introduce any new bills dealing with the registry since there is bi-partisan agreement that much work needs to be done in the problem areas of housing, behavioral health, drug addiction, and education, although there are considerable disagreements about how those problem areas should be addressed. There is widespread concern to reduce the numbers of homeless Oregonians—though we need to make the case for many persons who are homeless simply because of the registry.

Pressure is building on both sides of the aisle to revisit the decriminalization of addiction created by Measure 110, the voter passed referendum passed in November of 2020.

OV is organizing its legislative committee and will be discussing how to weigh in most effectively on issues of concern to persons on the registry in any of the above areas. We will also be watchful for bills that might jeopardize the rights of RCs. OV is always prepared to give testimony and/or write letters when we strongly support or oppose any new legislation.

The Oregonian has an article about the goals of our lawmakers: [Oregonian legislature story](#)

In the last two sessions, we have had more widespread participation in the legislative process than we have had for years. We hope to increase participation in this session, and later this month, there will be calls for persons who are willing to join in the work of the legislative committee. OV will provide information on how to follow and understand bills that are of concern to us as well as those that provide opportunities and support for RC's and their families who will also be encouraged to write to their legislators.

Finally, it is our hope to build a stronger and more experienced volunteer legislative team before the 2025 session. Currently, Oregon's registration laws are putting many more people on the registry every year than are able to get relief through the Parole Board. We hope to mount an effort to make relief from registration automatic for persons who have lived offense-free in the community for years. Unless something is done in this area, the number of Oregonians forced to live under the strictures of the registry will continue to grow unchecked.

So please, consider joining our legislative group this month. The more people we have engaged, the louder our voice will be. And those of us who have done this work have learned that coming to understand how the legislature works and being able to speak to our lawmakers helps combat the sense of helplessness that so many registrants and the families of registrants feel.

For more information on the way the legislature works, visit the Oregon Legislation website at: <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/>

And watch later this month for information on the listserv on how you can make your voice heard.

## **Partnership for Safety and Justice Advocates for Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform**

Partnership for Safety and Justice (PSJ) is a non-profit organization that has worked diligently over the past 23 years advocating for public safety and criminal justice reform in Oregon. It is an organization that welcomes the support of many other non-profits such as Oregon Voices. And, in the past, we have worked closely with this organization.

PSJ reports on its website that it has “developed an innovative and provocative model – one that engages survivors of crime, people convicted of crime, and the families of both.” This model has been adopted by groups across the country and continues to serve as a blueprint for public safety reform solutions.

Prior to the 2023 Oregon legislative session, PSJ, as part of the Transforming Justice Coalition, identified bills that it wanted to introduce or support in addition to lending assistance to the legislative efforts of their allies. The Transforming Justice Coalition consists of a group of Oregon’s community leaders who are directly impacted by the criminal justice system, culturally specific service providers, and policy advocates.

As a result of their efforts, SB 581 was passed and has been enacted into law. **Earned discharge** will now be available to more than 4000 additional people who are on parole, probation, and post-prison supervision. For people whose crimes are eligible and who are successfully meeting their goals, the new law is an incentive-based process that allows folks to earn up to a 50% reduction in their supervision period, regardless of when they were convicted.

PSJ notes that it will continue working with other reentry organizations to ensure that SB 581 is fully implemented. Visit both the PSJ and the Transforming Justice Coalition websites to learn more about their activities during the past legislative session. SB581 is only one example of their successes. Some bills, even though voted out of committee, failed to pass due to the Republican 35-day walkout. Most likely, PSJ and other groups will advocate for renewed efforts to reintroduce them. PSJ: <https://safetyandjustice.org/> Transforming Justice Coalition: <https://transformingjusticecoalition.org/>

PSJ is focused on crafting and supporting legislation that will expand ways for more Oregonians to access mental health care, drug treatment, and housing before the upcoming 2024 legislative session. The OV legislative committee will work to support its efforts.

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### **The Marshall Project Publishes a Newsletter For Adults In Custody**

The Marshall Project, according to its mission statement, is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that seeks to create and sustain a sense of national urgency about the U.S. criminal justice system. It has an impact on the system through journalism, rendering it more fair, effective, transparent, and humane.

The Marshall Project has created several publications. Some of us in OregonVoices subscribe to the daily newsletter “Opening Statement” written by Andrew Cohen, which is a comprehensive look at the criminal justice landscape. All publications, ranging from weekly to monthly issues, are listed on its website: <https://www.themarshallproject.org/>

OV wants to call your attention to one of its publications specifically written for incarcerated readers called “News Inside” and, at present, goes into 1,350 prisons/jails across the United States. It contains articles about criminal justice and every issue includes “The Peeps” comic, a “Reader to Reader” advice column, a crossword, and a “Thinking Inside the Box” quiz. If you or another AIC that you know would like to receive the “News Inside” publication, please visit the website to subscribe.

### **OV Sends Holiday Cards to AICs**

This year, some innovative OV board members designed and sent holiday cards to around 50 AICs. It was the first time that we have done this and it was a rewarding experience to think that we might have helped bring a bit of hope to those individuals during the holiday season.

Eugene CURE recently sent its members a link to a podcast that talks about what holidays are like on the inside. An interview with one of the AICs housed at the Federal Correctional Institution in Sheridan, Oregon, explains why they don’t always get their greeting cards. If family members and acquaintances want to send them photos, they have to go through a company such as Photo Pigeon or Shutterfly or copy them to a sheet of paper. Books would have to come from a company such as Amazon rather than directly from an individual. Oregon Voices will be vigilant in keeping track of what protocols are in place when we get ready to send holiday greetings next year.

Here is the link to the podcast, which is part of a series titled “Voices Unlocked.”  
[https://youtu.be/MYHRlqa4Tew?si=Ah\\_diiYrGF2fBKY](https://youtu.be/MYHRlqa4Tew?si=Ah_diiYrGF2fBKY)

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## **Expungement of Your Criminal Record**

The Oregon Justice Resource Center (OJRC) recently published information about expungement of records. In their article, “Motions to Set Aside Convictions, Dismissed Charges and the Records of Arrest (Expungement),” OJRC is calling attention to the fact that the Oregon Expungement Law changed in January 2022 and if you were not eligible at that time to expunge your record under ORS137.225, you should check to see if you are now eligible under Senate Bill 397. If you go to the following link not only will you learn about eligibility for expungement but also what it is and the steps you can take to apply. <https://ojrc.info/expungement>

Oregon Voices is aware of several people who have taken steps to successfully get their records expunged. Some counties in Oregon have also offered clinics about expungement. For example, in Lane County, the Restored Connections Peer Center partnered with the Public Defender Services to hold such a clinic in order to offer free assistance with expungement of arrests or convictions from court records.

## **Oregon’s Real ID Driver Licenses or Permits Yet Another Delay!**

Here we go again with another article about the need to obtain an Oregon Real ID Driver License, especially if you don’t have a passport. OV began explaining what it is and why you might want to get one the next time you need to renew or replace your regular Oregon driver license! The Oregon Real ID Driver License or your U.S. Passport is needed if you want to be able to board an airplane for travel within the U.S. or enter secure federal facilities that require ID for entry beginning **May 7, 2025**. Without an acceptable ID, the identification process at airport security could take much longer, causing you to miss your flight.

The federal government has changed the deadline for getting a Real ID Driver License several times since 2013. So, be aware of this latest one. If you want more information about the Homeland Security Act that created the need for the Real ID, go to the following link: <https://www.dhs.gov/real-id>

## **How Long Can a Registrant Visit Another State Before Having to Register in That State?**

Registrants often ask during OV meetings whether it is safe to travel outside Oregon without ending up on the registry of another state. What we do know is that registration requirements vary from state to state and that it is very wise to find out specific rules and regulations before you embark on your travels.

There is an excellent link (US Sex Offender Registration Laws) on the ACSOL website that gives all of the specifics that you need to know about visiting or moving to other states:

[https://www.probationinfo.org/sor/visit/#:~:text=\(d\)20person20a,such20in](https://www.probationinfo.org/sor/visit/#:~:text=(d)20person20a,such20in)

For example, it is surprising to note that RCs from Oregon must register in less than seven days when visiting or moving to at least twenty-eight states and territories, with those closest to Oregon being Idaho, California, Nevada, and Wyoming! There is an excellent graphic on the webpage that highlights those states with the most stringent requirements.

In addition, there is a chart that lists the actual laws relating to the registration requirements when entering each state to visit or establish a residence. Once again, it is so important not to end up on another state's registry because the requirement might be that you have to remain on it for several years or even for life.

Remember that if you are still on parole or probation, you always have to get permission from your probation officer before traveling out of state.

### **Sponsors, Inc. Celebrates 50 Years of Serving Those Reentering Lane County**

Sponsors was founded in 1973 and recently celebrated 50 years of service! It is mind boggling to think that this organization has transformed the lives of 21,576 individuals, matching many with mentors, and providing 242 beds! Those beds are located in various campuses owned by Sponsors that are absolutely well maintained and beautiful.

In addition, Sponsors, Inc. offers the necessary supportive services such as access to a Case Manager, employment support, individualized assistance to meet basic needs, behavioral health services, and mentorship. The reentry resource center offers a computer lab that is available during all open hours.

During 2023, Paul Solomon, acted as Co-Director of Sponsors as the newly appointed Director, Morgen Jaco, came on board. This team worked tirelessly during the transitional process. Paul has now moved into the role of Senior Advisor and will continue to be an advocate for those reentering life on the outside.

No doubt, you will still find Paul working diligently on various legislative interim committees, non-profits such as PSJ, and as someone who is sought after throughout the United States to share the successful model that Sponsors has become. It continues to grow by building new housing and providing additional opportunities for those AICs reentering Lane County. Please visit the website to see examples of the housing and services that Sponsors provides. And yes, registered citizens are included whenever possible.

<https://sponsorsinc.org>

## Washington Voices (WA Voices) Has Grown!

It seems like only yesterday when a few individuals began to develop Washington Voices from the ground up. Now, it is definitely well organized and has a great website that provides a lot of valuable information. OV hopes to work more closely with this group in the future. There are different ways that you can participate in this non-profit organization if you are interested. Please check it out: <https://wavoices.org/>

## Recommended Reading

Horowitz, Emily. *From Rage to Reason: Why We Need Sex Crime Laws Based on Facts, Not Fear*. Bloomsbury Academic, June 30, 2023.

The author explores how laws based on vengeance rather than justice or evidence create new forms of harm while failing to address the real and pervasive problem of sexual violence. She offers new ideas on how and why these false claims about sex offenses became so prevalent and how these myths have kept alive ineffective policies that have little to do with the reality of most sexual abuse. Horowitz argues that to truly prevent sexual abuse, we must lay bare the sources of these misunderstandings, debunk these claims in a systematic way, and have frank and genuine discussions about the limits of legal responses to complex social problems.

## 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. Once again, 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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