

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.

OV's main focus from the end of January until the end of June is all about watching bills that are introduced during the Oregon 2025 legislative session. OV formed an outstanding team to target bills that, if becoming law, would negatively impact RCs. They have devoted a lot of time and energy monitoring bills as they are introduced, targeting those that they want to support or defeat. Check your email often as committee members may be contacting you to write letters or give testimony if needed.

If you are at all interested in serving on this committee, it is not too late. Contact us at:

info@oregonvoices.org

Although this newsletter focuses on legislation, there are several other articles that contain helpful information such as a reminder to apply for a Real ID Driver's license, and how you might be able to get a crime expunged.

Tough on Crime or Soft on Crime? Where Are We Now?

After years of a Tough on Crime Approach, the legislative climate on many offenses, including sex offenses, changed slightly in 2010. In general, Measure 11 had passed in 1994, and had been part of the Three Strikes and You're Out laws passed nationwide. It brought long and mandatory sentences. But a new phrase that some legislators began saying was Smart on Crime. In the case of sex offenses, this led to the passage of HB 2549 that set up an attempt at a risk-based system - rather than crime based as SORNA. Implementation was hampered by lots of hoops to jump through and the slow pace of scoring. And the legislature had little willingness to make further changes. But there were few bills to return to the old system.

This session the legislative climate seems to be changing, and it may be part of a national trend. Rather than going for improvements to the system that are based on evidence, it often feels as if we are just holding the line. There have been bills to broaden notification for registrants for instance. Many did not come out of committee but could re-emerge. We monitor bills and write letters and sometimes testify about our position. But this will take diligence, and we may ask for your help in writing to committees or your legislator. Watch the listserv for requests.

The OV Legislative Team Is at Work Supporting Safe and Reasonable Laws for Registered Citizens

The 2025 Oregon Legislature convened January 21 and being an odd year, is holding a longer session, ending the last week in June. A phenomenal number of 3,317 bills have been proposed to make life better (or possibly difficult) for Oregonians. Your Representatives and Senators are holding meetings, public hearings, work sessions, and voting on everything: education, transportation, taxes, fighting wildfires, lack of affordable housing, homelessness, technology, healthcare...and more! The Oregon Voices Legislative Team identified 93 of the proposed bills that related to sex offenses – some helpful, some harmful. Out of that 93, there are still 19 of “our” bills alive as of April 9, that could become Oregon Law after passing in the other chamber. While we will continue to keep track of all of them, there are some we oppose and some we openly support.

OPPOSE: We decided to very strongly oppose and focus on 10 particularly bad ones. These are bills dealing with the registry and the release of your information from the registry, no matter what your Level of Risk is, which are definite backwards steps to any progress made over the years. As of April 9, 9 of those 10 bills are dead, meaning that they won’t become law. HB 3839, which would have allowed information about Level 1 and Level 2 Registrants to become available to schools and other places and basically undo the L1, L2 and L3 system now in place, was particularly troublesome; however, it did **not move** on from the House Judiciary to the Senate, thus stopping its passage. This is definitely a “win win” for our registered citizens. We made a special effort on this one to have OV folks either submit Public Hearing testimony against this bill or call their representative/senator to vote against it if it came to that. It was a good experience for the Team to learn how to call all OV folks into action, if/when we need to do so. We felt good that there were 8 testimonies submitted online (thank you!) but we have no idea how many folks might have called their legislators. Did you?

Another really troublesome bill, that we had and still have strong concerns about is SB 1122. It did pass the Senate and is now in the House. It states that the Parole Board “may exclusively consider an offender’s risk at the time of release, sentencing, or discharge.” This is an extremely complex bill and situation, necessitated by a court decision and we’re still digesting its implications. We will watch this one carefully as it goes along and may ask for your help again as it moves to the House.

SUPPORT: The OV Legislative Team strongly supported 3 bills that started to address the disastrous problems of the huge backlog of folks who have not yet been put into risk levels (and more get added each year than the Board can handle!). A key OV board member put in a lot of time with the Parole Board and submitted in-person testimony on these bills and it was a blow that none of them advanced, very possibly due to LOTS of and very emotional testimonies from victims....so the issues of reforming risk classification are still outstanding and troublesome. We are reminded that we need to keep fighting for evidence-based, not fear-based legislation.

There are only 4 “let’s do a study” very vague bills that are still alive; these passed in one chamber “as is” but could get amended somehow in the other chamber. We’ll definitely be watching carefully what they might turn into when they emerge.

Stay tuned as we are still watching all the bills that are left standing. And please consider getting involved if we ask for your help again this session. It is your privilege and opportunity to share your opinion on what the laws of Oregon should be.

Ryan T. O'Connor Has Been Appointed to Serve on Oregon's Court of Appeals.

Ryan O'Connor is an Oregon defense attorney who fought to reverse the unconstitutional practice of convicting people without a unanimous jury. He was recently appointed by Governor Tina Kotek to fill a vacancy on Oregon Court of Appeals.

If you recall, Oregon was one of two remaining states in the nation that allowed non-unanimous jury convictions until the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the practice in 2020. Since that time, Oregon's highest court determined that non-unanimous verdicts would be retroactively overturned.

Do You Have Your Oregon Real ID Driver's License or ID Card?

It's finally happening! If you want to fly domestically, you must have a Real ID Driver's License or a passport beginning May 7, 2025.

For the past several years, we have been educating readers about the need to get a real ID Driver's License and have quoted several deadlines for getting it done only to have the timeline pushed further and further out. Now, it seems that the requirement is finally going to happen.

The REAL ID Act, passed by Congress in 2005, enacted the 9/11 Commission's recommendation that the Federal Government "set standards for the issuance of sources of identification, such as driver's licenses." The Act established minimum security standards for license issuance and production and prohibits certain federal agencies from accepting for certain purposes driver's licenses and identification cards from states not meeting the Act's minimum standards.

A REAL Oregon ID Driver's License meets those federal security standards. It is required for boarding domestic flights and accessing certain federal facilities starting May 7, 2025, and is marked with a star in the upper right corner.

Our neighboring state of Washington has received federal approval to issue an Enhanced Driver's License which is considered an acceptable alternative to the Real ID but Oregon does not offer such a choice.

Remember, if you haven't upgraded your driver's license, you can still fly domestically if you have a passport. Travelers who do not present a Real ID compliant license or acceptable alternative will not be permitted through the security checkpoint.

A question was asked recently as to whether a Real ID is part of a national database. Research tells us that it is a national set of standards and that there is not the creation of a federal database. Each state continues to issue its own unique licenses, maintains its own records and controls who gets access to those records and under what circumstances. The real purpose is to make **identity** documents more consistent. For further information, please visit the following website: <https://www.dhs.gov/real-id/real-id-faqs>

Legal Aid Services Are Available to Help You!

Oregon Law Help connects people with civil legal information and legal help. The information on its site is written by Oregon attorneys for people with civil legal issues in Oregon:

<https://oregonlawhelp.org/topics/crime/how-clear-expunge-your-criminal-record-oregon>

This website is new and in progress. There is an information library as well as a data base for finding legal help and community resources.

Legal Aid Services of Oregon's Expungement Clinic provides statewide remote assistance and in-person clinics held in Gresham, Multnomah County, and Clackamas County. The Expungement Clinic provides free advice and limited assistance to low-income Oregonians interested in clearing their criminal or eviction records. Through the clinic, attorneys review clients' records to determine eligibility and complete all necessary court paperwork for those who qualify.

Contact your [local legal aid office](#) to apply for expungement help. For example, Lane County has instructions and forms for expungement in the Criminal section of the [Forms page](#). A filing fee may be required at the time an expungement is filed. See the [Statewide Fees](#) page for more information.

Sex Offense Registries Are Ineffective Causing Unnecessary Harm to Registrants and Their Families

A recent Policy Brief, titled “Ineffective, Costly and Harmful: Debunking the Sex Offense Registry” was published in March of this year by the Sex Offense Litigation and Policy Resource Center (SOLPRC) at Mitchell Hamline School of Law. It is well worth your read:

<https://mitchellhamline.edu/sex-offense-litigation-policy/>

An executive summary presents an historical background as to how and why the sex offense registry came into being. It was common belief that a public registry containing the identities of those who had been convicted of a sex offense would make communities safer. It also explains why it has not worked.

An introduction to the policy brief follows the executive summary and clearly states that nearly one-million people are subject to sex offence registries.

The document goes on to describe the history, purpose and operation of SORN* Laws followed by an explanation of how they result in “consequences that are counterproductive to their stated goals and needlessly cause harm to registrants and their families”.

It is a very well documented policy brief and contains valuable information that individuals could even use when giving testimony at judicial hearings when bills come up that OV and other groups want to defeat!

**SORN: A system of records is a group of any records under the control of any agency from which information is retrieved by the name of the individual or by some identifying number, symbol, or other identifier assigned to the individual. The Privacy Act requires each agency to publish notice of its systems of records in the Federal Register. This notice is generally referred to as the system of records, SORN.—*



Contributed by an OV individual who hopes his photography gives us feelings of purpose, strength, and energy.

White Bird and CAHOOTS Announce Drastic Reductions to Services

Counties and cities in Oregon are experiencing a shortage of funds, specifically, federal grant monies to support their social services programs, such as serving low income families, the homeless and the mentally ill. Such is the case in Eugene, Oregon, where it was recently announced that the White Bird Clinic (a non-profit) is going to dramatically reduce its mobile crisis intervention service (called CAHOOTS) this month. In addition, it is also having to reduce its crisis hotline.

This is a sad state of events simply because this program has been very active in the Eugene-Springfield area, is well established and is recognized nationally as one of the programs that other cities have used as a model when creating their own crisis intervention programs. It wasn't too long ago that OV featured an article in one of its newsletters about how White Bird was able to purchase two additional vans to use throughout the Eugene-Springfield area. The police departments frequently call CAHOOTS to intervene if they realize that there's a crisis that can be dealt with more effectively than by just making an arrest.

Up until now, CAHOOTS has responded to calls in Eugene 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Unfortunately, as of the second week in April, its services ended abruptly. CAHOOTS, which stands for Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets, will continue to be available in Springfield from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. In addition, White Bird will have to lay off more than 20 workers, keeping only a full-time staff of 7. These workers will primarily serve Springfield where CAHOOTS will maintain its current hours 11 AM to 11 PM every day. The reductions in Eugene are very drastic, especially since the number of unsheltered people has dramatically increased to nearly 4,000 and many of them are coping with drug and alcohol addiction and/or mental health issues. In the meantime, White Bird is desperately searching for alternative funding. Let's hope this non-profit is successful because it is such a valuable resource for those in need.

Health Care Reform Within Oregon's Prison Facilities

Articles penned by Bob Botkin for *The Capitol Chronical*, December 6, 2024 and February 3, 2025, discuss a shake up in the health care system within Oregon's correctional facilities and identify what measures are being taken to alleviate the problems revealed. The first article initially reported that two health care managers within the Oregon Department of Corrections were placed on leave while a thorough investigation of the health services within Oregon's correctional facilities was conducted. This action developed following several concerns about the health care of inmates, especially at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

An outside accrediting agency was hired to investigate any wrongdoing. One of its initial findings was that Coffee Creek had a backlog of 600 medical appointments. That merited a full-blown investigation. In the end, the agency released an 84-page report of its findings, which showed a whole series of problems uncovered after a review of inmate records and holding interviews with other staffers. These issues included delays in inmate care, and not making appointments outside of the prison walls that needed the approval of the agency's medical chief.

Falcon Correctional and Community Services Inc., an Illinois-based consulting firm that specializes in health care in prisons, was hired recently to work under contract for a year to study the policies, practices and quality of care within Oregon's prisons. The second article mentions some positive changes: 1) A health services recruiter will be put into service to hire well-qualified professionals, including doctors, nurses, mental health professionals and other support staff; and 2) An electronic health records system will be developed to improve documentation and track data across the prisons. Let's hope that better health care will soon become a reality for around 12,000 AICs housed in Oregon's 12 state prisons. For more information, consult:

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2025/02/03/amid-mounting-scrutiny-oregon-department-of-corrections-shakes-up-health-care-division/>

Keeping Youth Out of the Justice System

The Council of State Governments Justice Center has recently launched the Collaborating for Youth and Public Safety Initiative (CYPSI) to help states develop research backed strategies that keep youth out of the justice system, reduce recidivism and strengthen public safety. The Council will be partnering with states to expand community based solutions and improve outcomes for youth.

The Council states that the Initiative grew out of awareness that across the country, youth are facing increasing challenges such as mental health crises, school disruptions, and community violence. Way too often, the response is justice system involvement rather than proven community based solutions that address the root causes. Most communities now recognize that research shows early intervention, behavioral health support and targeted prevention programs lead to much better outcomes for youth and safer communities. Follow the progress of this Initiative and the Center's partnership with states at:

<https://projects.csgjusticecenter.org/cypsi/>

Michigan Embarks on a Project to Keep Youth Out of Court

Michigan's State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) has announced a new Status Offense Diversion Project aimed at reducing juvenile court involvement for low-risk youth. The initiative provides grants for up to five juvenile courts to implement community based diversion programs for status offenses like truancy, running away, and underage drinking. The project builds on Michigan's recent juvenile justice reforms, which emphasize diversion and rehabilitation over formal court processing. Hopefully, other states will follow Michigan's lead and create laws that positively impact the lives of young people.

"Sing Sing" Receives Three Oscar Nominations

The Marshall Project, offering non-profit journalism about criminal justice, publishes various articles and/or interviews about individuals and their lives on the "inside". Recently, an article appeared about an interview with Jon-Adrian "JJ" Velazquez, who spent almost 24 years in New York prisons before he was exonerated in 2024. He discovered acting through a program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility called Rehabilitation Through the Arts and the exciting outcome is that he and his fellow cast members of the drama "[*Sing Sing*](#)" received three 2025 Oscar nominations. These were for Best Actor, Best Adapted Screen Play, and Best Song. Even though this cast didn't win an award, it is very impressive that they received not one but three nominations!

Velazquez tells The Marshall Project's Aala Abdullahi in the latest installment of its "Life Inside" series that it is "My mission is to go into prisons and help those who, like me, have talent but lack opportunity. My hope is to show them that they can survive, live their best life,"

Acting, along with other opportunities, gives AICs a chance to explore and develop their own creative talents and helps them endure prison life.

The interview with "JJ" Velazquez can be found at:

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2025/02/28/sing-sing-film-jon-adrian-jj-velazquez>

Rules Have Changed for Sending Mail to AICs

Scott Simon, host of Weekend Edition Saturday on NPR, has recently begun publishing weekly newsletters. He wrote an interesting article in the February 13 edition reflecting on new national requirements of scanning all incoming mail of inmates.

Simon pointed out that the non-profit Prison Policy Initiative's 2022 Survey found fourteen states where inmates receive only scanned copies of letters, cards, and drawings rather than the actual pieces of mail that they have been sent by loved ones. Since that time, two more states have joined in implementing this policy.

As you probably know by now, such mail rule changes are now in effect in our own state and can be found on the Oregon Department of Corrections webpage:

<https://www.oregon.gov/doc/contact-inmate/Pages/letters.aspx>

Fearless Oregon Is Alive and Strong!

Fearless groups are active in several states across the country and serve as safe places for registrants who feel marginalized and ostracized by society to come together and share stories of hope and empowerment, to educate each other, learn about advocacy, and civil rights, and to succeed despite the restraints placed on them. A Fearless group is also a place to connect and make new friends.

The Fearless Oregon group began in March 2022 and has grown substantially in size. While the majority of participants are from Oregon, there are also regulars from other states. This group meets on the last Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm PST. Everyone is allowed to speak or just listen. Remember that this is not a therapy group, and no psychological advice is offered. All meetings are conducted via Zoom. Everyone is welcome: Registrants, spouses, partners, family members, friends, or supporters. For more information, contact Fearless Oregon via the OV Informational number listed at the bottom of this page.

Take Caution When Traveling Out of State

The warm days of summer are quickly approaching and some of you may be thinking of traveling out of state to attend family events or to take a short vacation. Please remember that each state has its own set of laws related to registration requirements. So, if you are a Registered Citizen, know those regulations before you travel because you do not want to take the chance of ending up on the registry in another state. Play it safe!

Last, But Not Least

Oregon Voices needs your support and input. We look forward to your attendance at our quarterly General meetings because it is where we can best communicate with one another. And, speaking of meetings, we plan on holding a Zoom meeting on Saturday, May 10. The Zoom invitation announcing the time, along with the agenda, will be sent out to those on the listserv within the next couple of weeks. Please try to attend and let us know if there is someone else that you would like to have join us.

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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