



# The Promise of Measure 57 Coalition

Individuals and Organizations Working Together to Find a Better Way to Fight Crime

promiseof57@gmail.com

B4

THE OREGONIAN • TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2009

## EDITORIALS

# Wait until later on Measure 57

Oregon legislators are faced with dreadful budget choices for the state; rushing to add new prison expenses shouldn't be a top priority

The conundrum facing Oregon legislators over how to pay for the new get-tough-on-property-crimes measure is just one of many they'll have to deal with this year. But, as Edward Walsh's story in The Sunday Oregonian suggests, the crime measure may offer one of the knottiest puzzles.

The recession has wiped out projected state revenue across the board, and legislators must find ways for the state to operate anyway. Voters approved the tougher sentencing law, Measure 57, because it was seen as the more reasonable, and less costly, alternative to a measure proposed by Kevin Mannix.

If you believe in government by ballot measure, which we do not, you can sort of see the logic behind this. One cheap lousy law is better than one expensive lousy law. Except now, of course, the state couldn't pay for either one and still live up its other obligations.

This is the particular thing that makes ballot measure politics such a poor process. It's tough for voters to think much about costs and economic implications when they are bombarded with campaign rhetoric designed to scare the living daylights out of them about crime.

In any case, now we have it. And now we have Mannix scaring the daylights out of legislators by suggesting that, in adding drug treatment to their improved measure, they were making some kind of blood pact with voters.

As state Senate President Peter Courtney pointed out to Walsh, "Nov. 4, when that measure passed, is 100 years ago," even if the law now obligates Oregon to start down the path of making it work.

To that end, Gov. Ted Kulongoski's prison drug and alcohol rehab budget includes an extra \$5 million for Measure 57 prisoners, which is a quarter of the entire amount he set aside for community corrections grants, including treatment programs. State



Inmates at the Columbia River Correctional Institution in Portland, where the Department of Corrections plans to place 40 temporary beds later this year to accommodate part of the influx of new inmates sentenced under Measure 57.

THE OREGONIAN

HB 5005

DOC

Budget

Rep. Chip Shields, D-Portland, is putting together a group to explore ways to expand the treatment programs necessitated by the law and has suggested taking closer looks at things such as allowing minimum-security prisoners to leave custody sooner, thus freeing up money.

More power to him and others who want to prioritize treatment in the criminal justice system, but legislators have very limited room to move on Measure 57. Even the hopes of a federal bailout for state and local governments look shaky at the moment.

Mannix, who wanted the more expensive crime measure, and John Foote, the Clackamas County district attorney who helped spearhead Measure 57, both now wonder aloud about the "promises" to voters who acted even with knowledge of an impending recession.

We doubt anyone had a real idea, back in November, of what things would be like now, but it hardly matters. What we have now is what we have.

Now the question is whether legislators should try to put any of Measure 57 on a fast track in the face of the current economy and other pressing state priorities. We don't think so.

Measure 57 can wait. Legislators should give it minimal support and move on to more important things.



# The Promise of Measure 57 Coalition

Individuals and Organizations Working Together to Find a Better Way to Fight Crime

promiseof57@gmail.com

B4

THE OREGONIAN • TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2009

## EDITORIALS

# Wait until later on Measure 57

### Oregon legislators are faced with dreadful budget choices for the state; rushing to add new prison expenses shouldn't be a top priority

The conundrum facing Oregon legislators over how to pay for the new get-tough-on-property-crimes measure is just one of many they'll have to deal with this year. But, as Edward Walsh's story in The Sunday Oregonian suggests, the crime measure may offer one of the knottiest puzzles.

The recession has wiped out projected state revenue across the board, and legislators must find ways for the state to operate anyway. Voters approved the tougher sentencing law, Measure 57, because it was seen as the more reasonable, and less costly, alternative to a measure proposed by Kevin Mannix.

If you believe in government by ballot measure, which we do not, you can sort of see the logic behind this. One cheap lousy law is better than one expensive lousy law. Except now, of course, the state couldn't pay for either one and still live up its other obligations.

This is the particular thing that makes ballot measure politics such a poor process. It's tough for voters to think much about costs and economic implications when they are bombarded with campaign rhetoric designed to scare the living daylights out of them about crime.

In any case, now we have it. And now we have Mannix scaring the daylights out of legislators by suggesting that, in adding drug treatment to their improved measure, they were making some kind of blood pact with voters.

As state Senate President Peter Courtney pointed out to Walsh, "Nov. 4, when that measure passed, is 100 years ago," even if the law now obligates Oregon to start down the path of making it work.

To that end, Gov. Ted Kulongoski's prison drug and alcohol rehab budget includes an extra \$5 million for Measure 57 prisoners, which is a quarter of the entire amount he set aside for community corrections grants, including treatment programs. State



Inmates at the Columbia River Correctional Institution in Portland, where the Department of Corrections plans to place 40 temporary beds later this year to accommodate part of the influx of new inmates sentenced under Measure 57.

THE OREGONIAN

HB 5005

DOC

Budget

Rep. Chip Shields, D-Portland, is putting together a group to explore ways to expand the treatment programs necessitated by the law and has suggested taking closer looks at things such as allowing minimum-security prisoners to leave custody sooner, thus freeing up money.

More power to him and others who want to prioritize treatment in the criminal justice system, but legislators have very limited room to move on Measure 57. Even the hopes of a federal bailout for state and local governments look shaky at the moment.

Mannix, who wanted the more expensive crime measure, and John Foote, the Clackamas County district attorney who helped spearhead Measure 57, both now wonder aloud about the "promises" to voters who acted even with knowledge of an impending recession.

We doubt anyone had a real idea, back in November, of what things would be like now, but it hardly matters. What we have now is what we have.

Now the question is whether legislators should try to put any of Measure 57 on a fast track in the face of the current economy and other pressing state priorities. We don't think so.

Measure 57 can wait. Legislators should give it minimal support and move on to more important things.