
OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 444-A

In writing before the House Health Care Committee / April 29, 2013

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Chair Greenlick and members of the Committee:

The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association (OSSA) is comprised of Oregon's 36 elected county sheriffs. Sheriffs take seriously their charge to be "conservators of the peace." Their role in public safety is broad, including routine patrol, investigating crime, search and rescue, marine patrol, jails, community corrections, court security, civil services and the issuance of concealed handgun licenses.

Oregon Sheriffs do not believe adding smoking in a vehicle when children are present as a secondary offense will pose a burden or cost on our ability to perform our patrol functions. Instead, Senate Bill 444 will provide patrol deputies with another tool in our toolbox to ensure the safety and welfare of the motoring public and their children.

The House Committee adopted amendments to SB444 which mirror a request made by Oregon Sheriffs. As the committee is most certainly aware, in addition to tobacco, people smoke cloves and other substances which are both legal and illegal. And, as the committee also knows, the list of legal substances to smoke may be expanding in the coming months and years. Sheriffs did not believe the expansion of this statute should be limited to only tobacco products.

On a personal note, I grew up in the household of a smoker. My father smoked for 22 years before quitting cold turkey while I was in middle school. I remember all too well the impact of his smoking in our little Volkswagen Beetle in the dead of winter in Klamath Falls with all the windows rolled up. My brother and I smoked the equivalent of hundreds of packs of cigarettes during our childhood by simply sitting in the backseat.

Oregon Sheriffs thank Senator Steiner Hayward for soliciting our input on this bill prior to the hearing. We always appreciate legislators taking time to seek the perspective of those charged with enforcing the laws passed by the Legislature. We especially appreciate her sensitivity to the potential cost enforcing laws might have during a time when Sheriffs' offices are struggling financially with reductions in state funding for important priorities.

I apologize for being unable to attend the hearing in person. I am doing my civic duty by serving on a jury today. Oregon Sheriffs urge the committee to give SB44-A a "do pass" recommendation to the full House of Representatives.

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