
OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 3453

Before the House Rules Committee / June 6, 2013

By: Bob Wolfe, Polk County Sheriffs / OSSA Legislative Committee Chair



Chair Garrett and members of the House Rules Committee:

The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association 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.

In parts of Oregon the lives and safety of ordinary citizens are at risk. I suspect all of you have heard by now the horrible 9-1-1 call from southern Oregon where the dispatcher had to tell a woman about to be sexually assaulted that her best choice was to ask her assailant to just go away. There was no state police trooper to respond. There was no deputy sheriff to respond. There was no city police officer able to reach outside the city limits to stop a violent attack on an innocent woman. This call is not representative of a civilized society.

Our social contract is stretched very thin. Sheriffs need the resources to at least provide basic 24/7 law enforcement in every corner of the state. Should safe communities be any less a right than a good public education, clean water or food? Oregon sheriffs stand ready to be at the table with the state and cities to work on safety-net proposals which will allow sheriffs to maintain jails, search for and rescue those who are lost and provide a jail bed for every person arrested who poses a risk to our communities. Sheriffs are elected to be "conservators of the peace" and we will continue to do whatever we can. But we don't have the authority to raise taxes. We are instruments of the government.

As sheriffs, we will participate in the process at every level. We will also be steadfast in our belief that these negotiated agreements must be temporary and must respect the Constitutional and statutory obligations historically given to the Office of Sheriff. Thank you for hearing this important bill and I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

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