



CITY OF PENDLETON

Office of Chief of Police
622 Airport Road
Pendleton, OR 97801
Phone (541) 276-4411
Fax (541) 276-9108
Dispatch (541) 966-3650
www.ppd.pendletonpolice.or.us

March 1, 2017

RE: Funding for Oregon State Police

My name is Stuart Roberts. I have served as a certified police officer in rural Umatilla County, Oregon for 25 years, the last fourteen of which have been as Chief of Police for the City of Pendleton. Over the course of my career, I have come to appreciate the difficulties associated providing diverse governmental services while being fiscally/morally responsible. I have also accepted the reality that rural Oregon typically does not receive the same political consideration as urban or more densely populated areas of the state when evaluating the feasibility of service delivery/modification. Believe me, I get it...population density will generally trump land mass when return(s) on investment and/or money is a determining factor. Nevertheless, I believe it is difficult for person(s) who have not tried to eke out a living in region(s) of the state whose prosperity is contingent upon unpredictable outcomes such as weather, predation, governmental regulation, etc. to understand the implications of seemingly minor modification(s) to public policy.

Therefore, I am submitting this letter in response to pending discussion(s) and/or deliberation(s) specific to the state's budget shortfall. Founded in 1931, the Oregon State Police has a long rich history of providing support services to city and county law enforcement agencies and Oregon citizens alike...many of which are "sole source" meaning no other agency in the state has the capacity and or ability to deliver said services. Over the course of my career, I have witnessed legislated responsibilities continually increase while revenues have remained static or decreased. Like in 1993 when oversight of the State Fire Marshal's Office, Law Enforcement Data System and State Athletic Commission and most recently the SafeOregon school safety tip line were all added to the daunting list of existing services including but not limited to; patrol, criminal investigations, fish & wildlife, forensics, identification and sex offender registry. In every instance, the State Police has worked diligently to ensure the unbiased delivery of said services is/was as efficient, comprehensive and collaborative as possible.

Yet, virtually every biennium OSP is being instructed endure unilateral cuts with little or no consideration being given to the prioritization or competency of services overall. I have extensive experience with the Oregon Department of Administrative Services, Department of Human Services, Oregon Health Authority and others that fail to collaborate, regulate and/or deliver their respective services in as responsive and responsible manner. I respectfully submit to you that, "from nothing comes nothing" meaning that over time, OSP's workforce has been reduced to a level that ranks Oregon 49th out of 50 state police organizations nationwide. I have also witnessed facilities close and specialized units eliminated.



Right now, the Governor's proposed budget calls for the closure of the Pendleton Crime Laboratory and the elimination of the criminal Investigation Drug Enforcement Section (DES). These reductions defy statistical information detailed in the 2016 OSP Performance Report, which shows that the Forensic Services Division has seen a 14% increase in case submissions in the last three years. The consequence of the increasing demand is the turnaround time for crucial evidence processing is trending upward at an unacceptable rate resulting in cases being dismissed and/or District Attorneys' not being able to file due to statute(s) of limitation expiring. At face value, this may seem like an unintended or unfortunate consequence, but until such messages have to be delivered to crime victim(s) there is no way to understand or explain how a very small fraction of the state's overall budget inadvertently places value on human life and dignity that in many instances will never be recovered. Make no mistake the elimination of the Pendleton crime lab entails not only high social cost(s), but also financial to rural users who must drive or ship evidence greater distances.

At the same time, OSP detectives assigned to drug task forces across the state have assisted federal and local law enforcement agencies in exceeding the projected number of Drug Trafficking Organizations identified, disrupted and/or dismantled by one and one half times. As I have stated in previous testimony, the State of Oregon receives approximately \$3.4 million dollars from the federal government as a part of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program managed by the Office of National Drug Control Policy to sustain task forces with approved HIDTA initiatives. HIDTA dollars are generally approved to reimburse overtime costs, buy expenses, leasing of vehicles, purchase of specialized equipment and/or to support drug/death investigations that exceed available resources.

I chair the Blue Mountain Narcotics Enforcement (BENT) Board. BENT is the only full-time multi-jurisdictional drug task force east of the Portland metro area and north of Bend. The detectives assigned to the team are the best of the best. A lot of time and money goes into training and equipping them to battle the ever-present and evolving drug trade in Eastern Oregon. Nevertheless, these detectives are not just "narcotics" detectives. They are also some of the most valuable of resources when investigating major crimes like homicides because of their training/abilities, familiarity with offender population(s), professional relationships, cross-deputation and informant pool. It is not uncommon for BENT detectives to be the first to arrive and the last to leave when a major crime is reported, because many agencies in rural Oregon do not have the personnel, training or experience to investigate major crimes in their respective jurisdictions. OSP currently assigns one supervisor and two detectives to BENT. When the team is at full strength, OSP personnel make up about 30% of the team. Consequently, the elimination of DES will not only cripple BENT, but also make it very difficult to meet or exceed the requirements of HIDTA funding resulting in the potential dissolution of an irreplaceable rural asset.

There are three criminogenic principles that should be considered by policy makers when considering cuts to criminal justice entities:

- **Motivated offenders** – History tells us that motivated offenders are always going to exist. How we identify, evaluate, interact and manage this population impact(s) service demands and quality of life issues for non-offenders.



- **Available targets** – Albeit the onerous of hardening targets is primarily the responsibility of citizens, the education and training provided by subject matter experts/practitioners equips them with the knowledge needed to minimize opportunities for offenders to victimize them.
- **Concerned guardianship** – From a government perspective I believe this is the category that provides the greatest chance for policy makers to protect the vulnerable. Because, this is where service providers (first responders, investigators, scientists, supervisory authorities, regulatory agencies, treatment providers and legislative bodies) come together to ensure services are robust and seamless enough to mitigate the impact(s) of the infinite number of scenarios that may adversely affect the populations served.

Please understand that it is not my intent to be critical of innovative thinking. In fact, I encourage ongoing fiscal assessment and evaluation. However, I am just not convinced that further reducing OSP capacity is in the best interest of public safety in Oregon, which is the most fundamental of government responsibilities. After all, the monies being considered are not those of the State of Oregon or any political party...they belong to the citizens. Therefore, as public officials, it is our absolute responsibility to be as fiscally and practically astute as possible. Hence, I respectfully request that you give strong consideration to the potential implications of Governor's proposed budget while at the same time evaluating which state agencies not only provide essential services, but also do it well...many do not.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Stuart Roberts
Chief of Police

