



OREGON ASSOCIATION CHIEFS OF POLICE
EXCELLENCE IN POLICING

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OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION
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To: Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

From: Jason Myers, Executive Director
Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

Kevin Campbell, Executive Director
Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police

Date: April 26, 2023

Re: SB 615A - Testimony in Support - Addressing Illegal Speed Racing

Chair Kropf and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association (OSSA) and the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police (OACP), we submit this testimony in support of SB 615A, a measure designed to address the dangers and growing prevalence of speed racing in Oregon. The measure includes a number of key provisions including:

- Modifies the definition of the offense of organizing a speed racing event to include a person who places an obstruction or barricade on a highway or assists another person in doing so to facilitate, or to aid another person participating in, speed racing or reckless driving.
- Reduces the penalty for the offense of organizing a speed racing event from a Class C felony to a Class A misdemeanor unless the defendant has been convicted of the same crime within the last five years.
- Modifies definition of offense of reckless driving to include behavior associated with speed racing.
- Adds reckless driving to offenses for which property used or intended to be used to commit or facilitate prohibited conduct may be subject to criminal forfeiture.

Speed racing, also known as illegal street racing, poses significant dangers to both participants and bystanders. Here are some of the main dangers associated with speed racing:

1. Risk of collisions: High speeds increase the risk of collisions between vehicles, which can cause severe injuries or even fatalities. The lack of safety measures in illegal street racing can exacerbate the risk of serious accidents.
2. Risk of pedestrian accidents: Speed racing often takes place on public roads and intersections, which increases the risk of accidents involving pedestrians who may be crossing the road or standing on the roadside.

3. Lack of safety measures: Unlike professional racing, speed racing does not have safety measures such as roll cages, fire extinguishers, or safety harnesses. This means that if an accident does occur, there is a higher likelihood of serious injuries or fatalities.

In recent years, the problem of illegal speed racing in Oregon is growing in frequency and law enforcement response is more complex due to evolving tactics. Blocking intersections and obstructing law enforcement response is a common tactic used at illegal speed racing events. The tactic involves the use of multiple vehicles, barriers, or other obstacles to block key intersections to prevent police vehicles from reaching the location of the race, effectively buying more time for the participants to disperse and avoid arrest. In these situations, law enforcement must prioritize the safety of the public in any enforcement action. Navigating through a maze of obstructing vehicles with pedestrians present to reach drivers, intent on avoiding arrest, can be unsafe for the public and the officers in pursuit.

We firmly believe the provisions of SB 615A will provide a meaningful deterrent to illegal speed racing in Oregon. We also believe the threat of losing a heavily modified and valuable vehicle to criminal forfeiture along with penalties for obstructing police response will make Oregon a less attractive place to hold these dangerous events.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 615A.