

Anti-Crime Measures

KINK

Friday, September 26, 2008 - Should first-time burglars and identify thieves be put in prison for three years? Oregonians will decide that question this fall. KINK Considers Measures 61 and 57.

Kevin Mannix's measure 61 would mean one strike and you're out for three years for first-time property criminals. But the measure itself has three strikes against it.

First, it does nothing to address the root problem of 80-percent of all property crime-- drug abuse. Second, it's unreasonable. Third, it's too expensive.

A much better option is Measure 57, an alternative referred to voters by the Legislature. Currently, for example, someone who breaks into your house typically won't get prison time until their fifth offense. Same thing with identity theft.

Measure 61--that's the unreasonable one--would put the first time offender away for a mandatory minimum of three years. However Measure 57 would mean prison time of about two years after the second offense. And it would require drug-addicted criminals to undergo drug treatment or risk even more time behind bars. We believe that drug treatment--while it doesn't always work--is still our most effective crime fighting tool.

Measure 57 provides the stick that is sometimes necessary to get drug addicts into treatment and the resources to provide that treatment. It would end what incoming Attorney General John Kroger calls our catch and release system of dealing with property criminals. It also would increase penalties and require a mandatory minimum sentence for high level drug dealers, even on the first offense.

Measure 57 would require construction of one new state prison. Measure 61 would require two to three. Measure 61's operating costs would be about 50-percent higher than the 143-million dollars a year needed for Measure 57, Measure 57 is still expensive, but the costs won't phase in for three or four years, at which time our recession certainly should be over. Long term, reducing crime is cost effective and it's also just worth doing to improve the quality of our lives.