

Column: Jack Crabtree - It's time to hold criminals accountable

By Yamhill NewsRegister.com

Commentary

By JACK CRABTREE
Yamhill County Sheriff

Our citizens are frustrated about property crime. Oregonians are so frustrated that they are going to pass both Measures 57 and 61; the question is which deserves the most votes and will be enacted into law.

Did you know that right now under current law, someone could steal your identity and your savings, ruin your credit for years and walk away with just probation?

Oregonians deserve better. That's why law enforcement officers like me are supporting Measure 57; it's the only measure on the ballot that toughens sentences for drug trafficking, theft against the elderly, repeat property and identity theft crimes, and requires addiction treatment.

You've heard it before. Oregon ranks in the top third of the nation for property crime and we're number 13 when it comes to identity theft. The list goes on. You and I both know that making sure our families and communities are safe means locking up the people we need to and then making sure they don't repeat crimes when they are released.

That's why it just makes sense to vote Yes on Measure 57. It's got the tougher sentencing that sheriffs like me need to protect you and hold criminals accountable, and it stops the revolving door by requiring addiction treatment. With 85 percent of incarcerated property offenders in Oregon addicted to drugs or alcohol, but less than 15 percent receiving intensive treatment while in prison, it's no surprise that 49 percent go on to commit additional crimes when they are released. We can do better than that.

Treatment is not a substitute for punishment but, by requiring addiction treatment in addition to tougher sentences, Measure 57 breaks the cycle of crime. And under Measure 57, those who refuse to complete treatment will get longer sentences until they get the message.

As a public servant, it's my responsibility to pay attention to the bottom line, too. Measure 57 will cost less than half the price of the other crime measure on the ballot because it will target the people who are actually a threat to public safety — first-time offenders who are starting down a path to a lifetime of crime and repeat offenders who have already chosen that path.

You have a choice this election year. Measure 57 toughens sentences for property crime, identity theft, crimes against the elderly and big time drug trafficking while also working to stop repeat offenders and revolving-door justice. That's why district attorneys, sheriffs, police chiefs, police officers, corrections officers and other organizations you trust, like AARP and Stand for

Children, are asking for your support and your vote for Measure 57. It's a better way to fight crime.