

# Letter: Sheriff believes Measure 57 is best of two choices

**East Oregonian**

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I have worked for the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office for 31 out of my 36 years in law enforcement and have had the privilege of serving the last 12 years as sheriff. I believe this gives me a unique perspective on issues surrounding the deterioration of the quality of life we have come to expect in the state of Oregon. Oregon's criminal population is using the theft of personal identification and property to fuel their drug habits. I understand and support the public's desire to hold these people accountable for their actions; however, merely incarcerating guilty offenders is not the answer.

Many citizens feel that the threat of incarceration is a deterrent to crime. I'm sorry to inform you that drug abusers have no problem doing their time. For example, in 1977 we had a local drug user lodged in our jail, and on Oct. 2 of this year he was again lodged in our jail. Between 1977 and today he has been arrested 24 times and has spent many years in and out of our jail and prison; he is now 69 years old. My point is simple - simply incarcerating drug abusers without a treatment option accomplishes only one thing, it keeps offenders from committing new crimes while they are incarcerated. It doesn't fix the problem.

As a founding and current member of the original Governor's Meth Task Force, I have had the opportunity to see the successes that occur when drug treatment has been provided. When you talk to a reformed drug abuser, 99 percent of the time they will lay their success at the feet of treatment. The philosophy of the Meth Task Force is based on a three-legged stool, enforcement, prevention and treatment. When you remove any one of the three legs the stool will fall over. Treatment must be included in any comprehensive action to address drug abuse.

Although measures 57 and 61 are well intentioned, both have their flaws. But when was the last time you saw a statewide measure that was perfect? I think the biggest flaw I see in measure 61 is the lack of a treatment piece. We can't afford to continue this cycle of incarceration for drug offenses or offenses committed because of the need for drugs. We must break the cycle of addiction; offenders must get off the merry-go-round of use and abuse.

Frankly I don't believe the state of Oregon can financially afford either measure. Given today's economic challenges, cuts in other state programs will need to be made to cover the costs indicated with each measure. More Department of Corrections facilities will need to be built and more corrections officers hired. DOC is struggling to find qualified candidates to fill current open positions - how will they fill the need for hundreds of additional correctional officers?

We can't continue to be just a warehouse for criminal offenders. If we are going to put the brakes on the deterioration of our quality of life, we need to break the cycle of addiction and help offenders become respectable, hardworking, drug-free citizens. This will only happen if we hold offenders accountable for their actions while making treatment for their addictions available to each of them.

I urge citizens of Oregon to look at the bigger picture and support measure 57. It makes the most sense.

**John A. Trumbo**

Umatilla County Sheriff>BR>Pendleton