

Measures 57 And 61: A Case Of Dueling Ballot Measures

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It's a case of dueling ballot measures in Oregon this year. Two criminal sentencing proposals are up for consideration.

The key difference: The consequences convicted thieves and drug dealers will face.

In the end, only one of this year's crime and punishment ballot measures can win. Salem correspondent Chris Lehman explains, as part of our series "Ballot Measure Backstory".

Salem resident Bruce W. Hanson doesn't have to go far to see the effects of crime. He just walks across the living room and opens the front door.



Bruce W. Hanson points to damage on his front door caused by someone trying to break into his Salem house.

Bruce W. Hanson: "This is unrepaired trim right here from where they tried to jimmy the door."

That effort was unsuccessful, but the burglar went around back and managed to get the patio door open. And when Hanson arrived home, the 84-year-old World War II veteran found his computer and other electronics equipment gone.

Bruce W. Hanson: "They were very fortunate they didn't come in when I was here, because I'm capable with military training of handling firearms. And I keep them loaded."

Hanson is fed up with crime in his northeast Salem neighborhood. It's a part of town that has a reputation for break-ins. And he's not alone in his aggravation.

Clackamas County District Attorney John Foote is one of several Oregon DA's who helped craft this year's Measure 57.

John Foote: “People are just tired of it. And they want something done. They want people who do that and don’t want to change their behavior to be locked up.”

Measure 57 is a legislative referral. It increases sentences for drug trafficking and for repeat offenders who steal property or commit identity theft. But Foote says it also requires addiction treatment for some criminals.

John Foote: “If we want to make sure that we address some of the underlying issues that are related to why they’re committing crime, then drug treatment is a smart thing to do.”

The Legislature referred Measure 57 to the ballot during their special session last February. It was crafted in response to another measure drafted by prominent Republican activist Kevin Mannix.

That’s Measure 61. Mannix says his version is better, because it includes mandatory sentences for first-time offenders.

Kevin Mannix: “You’re not caught the first time. You may commit 40 or 50 crimes before you’re caught. And when we finally catch you and convict you under Measure 57 we’re saying ‘Oh by the way, we’re going to give you another chance.’ Well that person does not need another chance. They need to be pulled out of circulation.”

Critics of the Mannix-crafted version say it’s too expensive.

The state estimates the measure would require more than a billion dollars in new prisons over the next ten years. The legislature’s version would cost one-third that.

Measure 61’s potentially higher price tag has some legislative leaders worried, such as Senate President Peter Courtney. The Salem Democrat says it would tie lawmakers’ hands.

Peter Courtney: “You will dramatically change the tone and tenor of the next session of the [Oregon Legislature](#) in terms of its ability to try and deal with the issues. We got health care issues, we got transportation issues. We got all those issues.”

Back in his neighborhood, Bruce W. Hanson is still studying up on this year’s competing ballot measures. He thinks mandatory sentences can be an effective deterrent. But he says the emphasis needs to be on long-term rehabilitation.

Bruce W. Hanson: “You don’t throw them away. You re-educate in a very positive fashion so that they do not have a choice to go the other way. You get them back on track and you make them a productive member of society.”

Oregon voters don’t actually need to make up their mind which ballot measure to support. They can vote yes on both of them. But if Measure 57 and Measure 61 both pass, only the one that gets more votes goes into effect.

