

# Lawmakers, counties spar over spending

By Jonathan J. Cooper  
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — Short on money and faced with the prospect of building expensive new prisons, Oregon lawmakers made a politically fractious decision two years ago.

They agreed to shorten sentences for some crimes and let certain low-risk inmates out a couple of months early, using the savings to beef up probation and other cheaper ways of punishing criminals.

But some worry the Legislature will shortchange the local governments that are taking on a bigger burden for punishing people convicted of crimes. The Legislature's chief budget writers have proposed \$20 million for the program — about a third of the money that prison officials say has been saved by slowed prison growth.

"It's a signal to the counties that the Legislature isn't really serious about doing public safety differently, because they're willing to fund prisons, but they're not willing to fund local accountability," said Shannon Wright, deputy director of Partnership for Safety and Justice, an advocacy group.

With prison costs ballooning, many states have adopted varying versions of a policy known as justice reinvestment. By changing sentencing laws, they hope to spend less money building and running prisons, freeing up cash to more intensively watch offenders through probation, treat them with addiction or mental-health counseling or provide housing and education.

Oregon joined the fray in 2013. A bill reduced sentences for certain drug and property crimes as well as driving with a suspended license and identity theft. A "transitional leave" program was extended from 30 days

to 90 days, allowing low-risk inmates to leave early and be closely monitored as they integrate into society.

The plan was supposed to freeze the prison population at around 14,600 inmates for five years. On April 1, Oregon had 14,634 inmates in prison, according to the Department of Corrections data.

Prison officials say the changes have saved nearly \$58.5 million during the next two-year budget cycle by delaying the opening of a mothballed prison in Madras, which otherwise would've opened last year, and delaying the construction of a prison in Junction City.

Before he resigned in February, former Gov. John Kitzhaber proposed spending all \$58.5 million on grants to counties for justice reinvestment programs.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Salem, said the legislative leadership is committed to the program and hopes to beef up the proposed \$20 million, but "it's unlikely" the final number will be \$59 million.

Kitzhaber's budget "did us a disservice by putting a number out there that we didn't think we could achieve," Kotek said.

Kotek did not say where additional money might come from when she spoke to the media last week.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Cloverdale Fire District's Board of Directors received recognition for their efforts to obtain a bond measure to purchase new buildings and vehicles for the District. From left: Jerry Johnson, John Thomas, Keith Cyrus, Cindy Kettering, Tom Barrier, and Lieutenant Damon Frutos.

## Cloverdale fire honors its own

Cloverdale Fire District, friends, and families, met at the Sisters Rodeo Grounds clubhouse last Saturday evening to honor their volunteerism. Each year the members meet and recognize accomplishments and activities in which members have participated.

The membership of the district is made up almost entirely of volunteers, with only the fire chief and training officer receiving a salary for their service.

During the last year, firefighters have participated in a number of activities to help their community beyond emergency response. Volunteers participated in activities ranging from litter pickup along Highway 20 to raising funds for victims of the

mudslide disaster in Oso, Washington, to teaching students at Sisters High School that participate in the fire technology curriculum.

In addition to honoring the volunteers for their efforts, outgoing volunteer President Lieutenant Damon Frutos presented certificates of appreciation to the district's board of directors for their support in asking taxpayers in the district for a tax increase to provide safe, modern equipment for the volunteers.

Volunteers recognized for their service were Kyle Wattenburg, Ben Pope, and William Cyrus for reaching one year of service with the district; Marcus Peck and Clinton Weaver for five years of service; and Jon and Cindy Kettering, William Farley,

Spencer Cashwell and Keith Banning for 10 years.

Kyle Wattenburg was presented with the Rookie of the Year award, Lieutenant Damon Frutos with the Volunteer of the Year Award, and Lieutenant Clinton Weaver with the Deputy Chief John Thomas Award for service to the district.

Firefighter John Downs, and Lieutenants Rex Parks Jr. and Clinton Weaver were recognized for 100 percent training drill attendance during the last year.

Numerous volunteers were recognized for their efforts to install the modular office building at the Cloverdale Road station, and for their efforts with the upcoming building and truck-purchasing projects.

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