

# Decision on state prison budget won't come easily



SALEM (AP) — Is the Oregon Legislature going soft on crime?

It's a question that's being asked in some circles as committees go to work on budgets for corrections and public safety agencies.

And policy differences, especially over prisons, appear to have the House and Senate on a collision course.

Oregon has gotten tougher on crime over the past several years, completing a massive prison construction program and adopting sentencing guidelines intended to make sure the time behind bars fits the crime.

Among the state's worst criminals, 46 percent were sent to prison in 1992, up from 34 percent in 1986, according to figures compiled by the Oregon Criminal Justice Council. Among the worst criminals sent to prison in 1992, the average stay was 49 months, up from 34 months in 1986.

But the consensus among those monitoring crime and prisons issues, said Roseanna Creighton of Citizens for a Drug Free Oregon, "is that nothing is happen-

ing to move us forward."

"I think we need to clarify there's space in prisons that isn't being utilized," she said. "I think the public needs to know that."

There is indeed space in prisons.

Two small prisons have been closed since 1991. In addition, half of the new Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario sits empty and unused. And Gov. Barbara Roberts has proposed closing two more prisons to help narrow the state's projected \$1.2 billion budget gap.

The Senate Judiciary Committee has adopted a plan following Roberts' outline and sent it to the Senate's budget-writing Ways and Means Committee, where it awaits further work.

The measure, SB139, would cut several hundred prison beds from the system. It increases spending on such things as day reporting centers, where convicts on probation are supervised and have access to services to help them find jobs, stay off drugs and stay out of trouble.

Within the constraints of Measure 5, the governor wants to do what she can to reform a corrections system that performs poorly, said Roberts' chief of staff, Patricia McCaig.

McCaig pointed out that four-fifths of the state's 6,500 prison beds are occupied by repeat offenders. The governor believes putting greater emphasis on preventative measures will help break the cycle of recidivism, she said.

That approach clashes with the vision of House Appropriations Chairman John Minnis, who expects the measure to increase no matter what.

"The bottom line is we have the obligation," the Portland Republican said. "We're going to have to pay for it."

Minnis, a Portland police detective on leave to serve in the Legislature, has a subcommittee reviewing prisons policy.

The subcommittee chairman, Rep. Kevin Mannix, D-Salem, said the three-member panel was in the midst of a broad review of prison policy.

He said it was clear a number of legislators would reject what he characterized as the governor's "retreat" on prisons.

"Cutting back 10 percent of the prison beds is a dead-end policy," Mannix said. "I didn't get elected to soften up the prison system."

The House plan is likely to add up to 900 prison beds to the system by reopening the closed prisons, keeping the ones targeted for closure by Roberts open, phasing in the 324 empty beds at Snake River, and funding up to 319 temporary beds.

The projected state budget shortfall does mean there won't be any "extras" on the corrections and crime front in 1993, Mannix said.

But he warned the get-tough-on-crime crowd to be careful in its analysis of the Legislature's achievements.

With the budget crunch, Mannix said, legislators are being "softer on higher education, softer on community colleges, softer on education, softer on human resources."

"So in that context, I guess we're being softer on crime, too," Mannix said.

But, he said, "If we back away, then I'll be the first to scream, to yell."

**'If we back away, then I'll be the first to scream, to yell.'**

— Rep. Kevin Mannix, D-Salem

## House smoking ban will focus on minors

SALEM (AP) — Smoking would be banned in virtually all places where minors can be present under a bill approved Monday by the House Judiciary Committee.

The measure was endorsed on a 6-2 vote and now goes to the entire House.

The bill, HB3066, would be the broadest expansion of the state's Indoor Clean Air Act since it was passed in 1981.

"This is something we can do to help kids now," said the committee chairman, Rep. Del Parks, R-Klamath Falls.

He said the tougher law could ease peer pressure to smoke as well as reduce children's exposure to second-hand smoke.

Under the bill, smoking would not be permitted in such places as restaurants, airports, arenas, bowling alleys, colleges and businesses where minors are employed.

Smoking still would be allowed in bars and taverns, including bars in restaurants and airports, and in businesses that do not employ minors and where minors are not present.

Stores selling primarily liquor and tobacco also would be exempt from the smoking ban.

Hotel and motel operators could continue providing rooms for smokers as long as they also had a "reasonable number" of non-smoking rooms available.

The ban would not apply to any private residence, including one that also is used for a business.

Violators could be fined up to \$100.

Dick Koesan, the Oregon lobbyist for the Tobacco Institute, said the organization opposes all of the bill.

"We've got an Indoor Clean Air Act that works," he said. "This goes too far."

## Teen doing well after freak accident

RICHLAND (AP) — The temperature had soared into the 90s that day last summer.

Steve Sharp was working alone on a ranch near this small Eastern Oregon town.

Something became clogged in the hay baler he was operating, so he turned the equipment off and climbed off the tractor.

"I was working on the baler, trying to get the hay out," said Sharp, 18. "All of a sudden, it kicked on and sucked both my arms in."

The old hay baler that gnawed off his arms still is in the meadow not far from Sharp's home. But he barely spares it a glance now.

"It's just something that happened," he said. "It wasn't its fault. That's the way it is."

Sharp fought the rollers and belts that were moving thousands of revolutions per minute, but he couldn't break free.

His only chance was to allow the machine to cut off his arms, then walk for help.

"I had to do'er," he said. "I had to keep turning them so it cut, so I could get loose."

Surrendering to the machine never seemed to cross his mind.

"No reason to," Sharp said. "I was still alive and kicking. I was pretty scared, but it was more I was really serious. I knew if I didn't get out of there and up to the house, I'd go the rest of the way through."

Finally free, he staggered 300 yards to the house of rancher Steve Saunders, 65.

"I lost so much blood, my sight started going," he said. "I started really feeling drowsy. I was having a hard time walking and a hard time seeing."

He found Saunders dozing on the couch.

"I kind of hid my arms behind me and woke him up," he said. "He's kind of old, and I didn't want to scare him too much. I told him, 'My baler chewed my arms off, call 911.'"

The Richland Volunteer Ambulance arrived

within minutes. The crew sped Sharp to Baker City, about 45 miles away.

Emergency room attendants stabilized the teenager's condition and injected pain-killing drugs, then put him on a 300-mile flight to Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland for treatment.

Now, the junior at Pine Eagle High School is on the mend. In November, he was fitted with prosthetic arms that have steel rotator hooks for hands. Most of the cost was paid by the state workers' compensation program. Other money came from neighbors' donations.

"The community has been terrific to stand by us financially in every way possible," said his mother, Betty Sharp, 46.

Sharp's positive attitude and lack of emotional trauma initially worried experts at Shriners Hospital, where the teen undergoes physical therapy. They thought he might be repressing his feelings.

Before long, though, everyone agreed Sharp was merely a resilient, stoic young man.

"He is really incredible," said Kristin Gulick, his occupational therapist.

She figures it has something to do with his strong family.

"They fish. They hunt. They jump off cliffs into rivers," she said.

Betty Sharp says her son "is strong headed. He's been that way ever since he was born. I guess. Get him aimed in the right direction and it turns out pretty good."

The family is also devoutly religious and attends the nearby Nazarene Church that his grandmother founded and preached in for years.

Lately, Steve Sharp has been thinking about his future. He may become a farm mechanic, like his father, or perhaps a computer graphics artist.

"I'm still looking around," he said. "I'll find something I can do. It shouldn't be too much of a problem."

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