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Jail releases prisoners before trial

The Lane County Jail is
forced to free inmates to
prevent overcrowding

By Michael Hines
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Lane County Jail released 96
inmates because of overcrowding
last week, but that's hardly different
from any other week.

The real difference is that now
the county is publicizing its weekly
release statistics.

"We want to let the public know
what's going on," County
Spokesman Mike Moskovitz said.
"Our intent is not to scare the pub-
lic. Our objective is to get these sta-
tistics out so the public knows
what's going on."

And what's going on doesn't ap-
pear to many in the Lane County
Sheriff's Office.

The jail runs a computer program
twice a day that assigns points to
each inmate, assigning more points
for harsher crimes. When the jail ex-
ceeds its 333-inmate limit, which
happens on a regular basis every
day, the jail lets them go, often be-
fore they ever make an appearance
in court.

"It's maddening—it's frustrating
as hell," Sheriff's Capt. Tom Brett

said. "We've gotten to the point of
being absolutely, patently ridicu-
lous in terms of service."

Brett doesn't blame law enforce-
ment for the number of releases,
though. He said he has watched the
system decay and erode in Oregon
since he was a rookie cop with the
Eugene Police in 1969.

The problem may lie with the
way law enforcement is presenting
its case when seeking additional
funding.

Attempts at passing a levy have
failed repeatedly.

Last November, two county-
wide law enforcement levies failed.
Measure 20-05 would have provid-
ed operating levy money to the
county justice system. Measure 20-
06, which failed by only seven
votes, would have provided funds
for a jail intake assessment center,
and officials say this levy would
have helped the most.

According to Moskovitz, the
county Public Safety Coordinating
Council is already talking about
what to do next. It will present a
new ballot measure, he said, but the
packaging will be different.

Meanwhile, the county will con-
tinue publicizing inmate release
statistics, Moskovitz said.

"It's costing a lot of tax dollars to

house them, feed them, process
them and rearrest them," he said.
"The process is not working."

Additional public awareness
may cause temporary concern
among county residents, but this is
a long-term effort, Moskovitz said.

Change could keep some of the
regular criminals in jail for a signifi-
cant amount of time, Sheriff's Lt.
Bud Spencer said.

"The same people come in over
and over," said Spencer, who
works in the adult corrections secu-
rity section. "What we're trying to
do here is keep the worst of the
worst in jail."

Inmates facing charges of murder
and other gruesome crimes have no
chance of early release because of
the points system, he said. But he
added that 80 percent of inmates
who are released before their court
appearances do not show up.

Currently, the state is paying for
an addition to the Lane County Jail
that will house short-term peniten-
tary prisoners, Moskovitz said. The
county is not contributing any mon-
ey to the project.

Mike Hines covers the Eugene police
for the Emerald. He can be reached
via e-mail at
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Prosecutors might want Clinton to testify

The Associated Press

Rep. Henry Hyde, point man for
the House impeachment team, had
suggested to reporters on Wednes-
day he might want Clinton to testi-
fy, but the White House has repeat-
edly said it won't happen.

Hyde, chairman of the House Ju-
diciary Committee, went first for
the prosecutors. "We are here, Mr.
Chief Justice and distinguished
senators, as advocates for the rule
of law, for equal justice under the
law and for the sanctity of the
oath."

Hyde and others put Clinton's

oath of office—and his alleged vio-
lation of it—at the heart of the case
against him. Senators were twice
shown videotaped snippets of
Clinton raising his hand and swear-
ing an oath: first on Inauguration
Day in 1993 and then when he tes-
tified in court proceedings.

In his presentation, Sensenbren-
ner laid out the familiar allegations:
that Clinton had lied before Starr's
grand jury, had lied in a deposition
in the Paula Jones lawsuit and had
taken a variety of actions to ob-
struct Starr's investigation. Accord-
ing to the accusations, these in-

cluded coaching his secretary, Bet-
ty Currie, to give false testimony, to
find a job for Ms. Lewinsky in New
York and to encourage her to give
false testimony.

"The evidence will show that the
president piled perjury upon per-
jury," Sensenbrenner once said.

Sensenbrenner argued that per-
jury is an impeachable offense. He
cited the case of judicial impeach-
ments in the Senate, one as recently
as 1989. "The truth is the truth, and
a lie is a lie. There cannot be differ-
ent levels of truth for judges than
for presidents," he said.

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