

'Career' criminals targeted by new Wyden law

A new initiative to reduce gun violence across Oregon will rely on a law written by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) in 1984 to target as many as 6,800 of the state's most hardened prior offenders.

"Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN)," a federal, state and local partnership announced Jan. 21 by U.S. Attorney Mike Mosman, will seek to arrest "armed career criminals" still carrying weapons in Oregon.

Currently 6,800 people in the state have been identified as subject to the Armed Career Criminals Act of

1984, a law Wyden wrote with Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Penn.) that mandates a 15-year federal prison sentence for criminals with three violent offenses on their records who are then found with a weapon.

PSN is making the apprehension of armed criminals who fall under this statute a key component of the state's fight against gun violence.

A classic study states that one-half of all crimes, and two-thirds of violent crimes, are committed by approximately six percent of the criminal population.

From its inception, PSN has sought to target that small percentage of criminals who repeatedly commit violent acts. In 1986, Wyden wrote an amendment to the law to include repeat drug offenders found in possession of firearms.

PSN is a joint effort of the U.S. Attorney's Office, federal, state and local law enforcers, and community leaders across Oregon.

In addition to targeting armed career criminals, it also seeks to reduce teen gun violence and domestic violence involving firearms.



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