

ROSENBLUM, from page 1

religious activities of Oregonians. In recent years, we've seen more collaboration between local and federal law enforcement, which has shown an increasing willingness to monitor citizens. What role do you see the attorney general playing to make sure Oregonians aren't unduly spied upon?

E.R.: I just had a meeting with representatives from the ACLU, and I know that they are interested in ensuring this potentially through legislation. I'll work with them if there's something they're proposing. I'll definitely want to be at the table on that.

I don't want people who aren't violating the law to be spied upon in our state. The attorney general's office has a role in surveillance issues, and I want to make sure that it's all properly done. I'm proud to say that from what I understand, and I'm new to the job, but the work that we do has not been questioned in the courts. It's never come up through the courts as improper type of surveillance, and so I'm hoping that will continue to be the case under my leadership. I'll also be at the table with the groups that are supportive of law enforcement. But I don't want people who are innocent to be spied on. That's just not the way government ought to be run. So rest assured, that's not going to happen under my watch to the extent that it's within my responsibilities.

J.T.: What do you think about the settlement between the five banks deemed most responsible for the foreclosure crisis and 49 state attorneys general?

E.R.: I think it was a good start. We've followed up since then with our mortgage servicer rules to ensure the protection of our homeowners. We have a very excellent Unlawful Trade Practices Act in Oregon. So what we've done is create rules that I think are helpful as guidance to our mortgage servicers, and I think they'll assist us in bringing enforcement actions where we need to do that. And we may well need to do that because there have been some real problems. So I'm in favor of the settlement.

I don't think it solves all the problems. We have a mortgage foreclosure avoidance mediation program up and running, and I hope that's going to be a helpful program for homeowners helping them stay in their homes.

J.T.: Had you been AG when the negotiations were being worked out, would you have handled it differently? Would you have held out for more money or a full investigation of the banks?

E.R.: I really can't answer that because I don't know all the details of the negotiations. But from what I know of the resolution of the settlement it was probably the best we could do at that time, and what was good about it — in addition of course to the money and the requirements that the banks are now subject to — is that it kept open other options for states. We still have the right to go after the banks for fraud and criminal activities. So I was pleased that we

didn't give up all that much for entering the settlement which does provide us with some financial compensation.

J.T.: You said it's a good start. What's next for the banks with you heading up the Oregon Department of Justice?

E.R.: Well, I think the most important thing really is to try and keep people in their homes and to bring banks to be accountable for any kind of fraud, or if there has been any criminal behavior to take them to task for that. But I think what's most important right now is to find a way to be at the table with all the entities and people involved to keep people in their homes, and that's what I'm hopeful about with this mediation program. Unfortunately, it's not looking as promising as I would have hoped at the outset.

So that's what I'm really focused on right now, how to get everyone at the table and find out what the problem is and why it's not moving along as we would have hoped with the banks participating in the program. There's a lot going on right now causing banks to hesitate to participate in the program. I want to find a way to get past that.

J.T.: Are you planning to go to the legislature for any new powers or authorities?

E.R.: I am going to reconvene a law improvement group in the attorney general's office. You're catching me a little ahead of the curve on that decision because I'm not sure what its agenda is going to be. I'm really not sure it's going to be necessary yet to ask for more powers or authority. I think that we have a lot of enforcement powers, we need to use them appropriately.

As far as legislative matters, I'm looking to be actively involved in the area of corrections reforms, and that's really important and highly relevant to what an attorney general does. So that's maybe number one for me for what I think I can contribute during this legislative session.

As I'm sure you're aware my predecessor had a very ambitious agenda regarding public records. I want to take another look at it. I'm not planning on bringing back the same overall redo of the law, but I definitely want to look at some areas and see

what we can focus on. There are, like, 400 exemptions in the public records law. I'm not sure that's in the interest of the public.

J.T.: You mentioned corrections. What do you think about Measure 11 (Oregon's mandatory sentencing law)? We've locked up a bunch of people, disproportionately minorities, and it's costing lots of money.

E.R.: What I want to talk about is our felony sentencing structure, and that's part of it, even the death penalty is part of it. It's all part of ensuring the safety of our citizens and providing the appropriate punishment and rehabilitation, all the things that go into consideration with sentencing. The bottom line is this: the system we have right now, in my view, is too expensive. But at the same time, as attorney general it's my job to ensure the safety of our citizens.

Let's focus on what we can do to ensure

safety but at the same time save money. I think we're close to the top on how much we spend on incarceration in this state. I served as the chair of the governor's advisory committee on corrections populations forecast for a long time. We had people crunching numbers and telling us each quarter what the effects of various sentencing policies were having on our populations, and I can tell you it was always bad news.

Measure 11 appeared, and I emphasize appeared, to blame for that. Now in addition to Measure 11 there's Measure 57 and other potential measures. So it's not just about Measure 11, it's about what is the right sentencing policy in the state to ensure that costs can be conserved and continue to provide for the safety of the public.

I think the public safety commission that the governor has convened has some excellent people on it. I'm anticipating that report from the commission, and I'm meeting with people on it on a regular basis.

At the end of the day, I'd like to develop my own position as to whether to adopt the recommendations of the commission and hopefully be in a position to persuade the governor. The governor has such incredible clout, but he also has such an ambitious agenda of his own. I don't know that this is at the top of his list as far as what he's focused on, and I'd like to be the one to move his office in a direction of support. If we can get on the same page on some core recommendations, then that has the chance of moving forward as a legislative package.

I think that Measure 11 is part of the whole package and you can't set it to the side and say, this is sacred ground, you can't touch it. And you can't say it's a disaster and causing all the problems. I think we have to be open minded about Measure 11 and not be afraid to mention it. Of course it didn't come about the same way as our sentencing guidelines, but it's part of our law. I have applied Measure 11 a thousand times as a judge in Oregon.

J.T.: Oregon might legalize marijuana this fall. If the federal government objects, how will your office respond?

E.R.: Well, I haven't really thought too much about that yet. I try to look at it on a step-by-step basis, and our responsibility at this point is to ensure that ballot measures have gotten on properly.

Once we get to that point, my job, the way I look at it, is to enforce the will of the people, just like with the medical marijuana law was the will of the people 14 years ago, and I've said on a number of occasions that I will stand up for the people of Oregon because I think that's the the right thing to do as the state attorney general. I'm not the U.S. attorney. I'm not the U.S. attorney general. They each do their job. I'll do mine.

J.T.: So you'll defend the law if the federal government objects to it?

E.R.: Absolutely.

J.T.: Can I ask you how you're planning to vote on that initiative?

E.R.: I haven't decided. I haven't even read it. So I don't know how I'm going to vote, and I'm not sure I would tell you if I did know. I want to be really fair and take a neutral position at this point given the role the attorney general plays in the ballot measure process.

J.T.: Your predecessor reinstated a civil rights program at the DOJ. Do you have any plans for that?

E.R.: Well, what he did actually was hire one lawyer. So I guess you can call that a program because we didn't have a lawyer doing civil rights exclusively. That's not to say we didn't have lawyers handling civil rights.

I absolutely want to continue our role in civil rights. That said, we have to make sure that we have the resources to do that, and doing it in a way that works in collaboration with other state agencies, such as the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

There were some real difficulties, to put it mildly, between my predecessor and the labor commissioner, and that's been smoothed over really well by our civil rights lawyer.

I'd like to see what we can do in the area of housing and the area of employment with the labor commissioner and what he can do in his shop is really important.

J.T.: Are there any other attorneys general that are doing good work you'd like to replicate?

E.R.: There is one project that I'm particularly interested in. The attorneys general of California and Nevada, both of them women, are jointly engaged in a human trafficking project, and they've invited me to consider joining up with them. But I need to get the details from them first before I join up. So it makes sense for me to try and collaborate on something like that, and it also happens to be an area where the attorney general has not been involved in the past. So I think it's about time that we were involved, to whatever degree is appropriate.

J.T.: During the campaign you said you wanted to look after mothers, children, the elderly and other vulnerable populations. What specific things are you going to do?

E.R.: We have a lot of really great programs, but they've never really been highlighted. Half of our employees are in 12 offices across the state work in collecting child support. The fact of the matter is that those people are all looking out for the health and safety of our kids. I want to make sure we're doing that effectively. I want to bring our computers up to the modern age. We're using a 1980s program to collect child support.

With the elderly, I want to bring back our focus on elder abuse; whether we need to have new policies. I want to reconvene the elder abuse task force. I don't think that the attorney general has been as engaged, and I've asked our people what kind of focus we have in our Consumer Protection Division. About 80 percent of the complaints that we get are from seniors.

In the past we've had a consumer outreach person doing four or more events a week. That person has moved to the consumer protection division doing more case work. I want a Spanish speaker in the front office, someone who will be able to get out into the community and focus on our vulnerable diverse communities, our senior communities and our kids and teens.

You can't just assume that because we have a plan for one community, it can be folded over onto another community. The Hispanic community isn't the same as the black community. They don't have all the same concerns. Community organizing is something that traditionally isn't the thing you think of with the attorney general's office.

I'm not saying we should be siloing our community, but it's becoming clear they have different issues, and we can't just throw them all into the same pot.

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