

Statewide profiling ban a foundation for local justice

Oregon lawmakers made a bold statement this session when they decided that all law enforcement agencies in the state must establish policies that prohibit profiling. This is less of an impact on Portland, where such a policy is already on the books, but it is a sweeping move for all agencies across the state to step up their game.

In addition to the policy against profiling, the bill — expected to receive Gov. Kate Brown's signature as of press time — requires that each department sets up a system for the public to file complaints through multiple channels, even anonymously. And it requires that

departments have a process in place for investigating those complaints. Starting next year, the scope of profiling will be defined, statewide, to include bias based on a person's age, race, ethnicity, language, color, religion, national origin, mental disability, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender or housing status.

It's laying a foundation of process, yes, but also expectation. The expectation the public should have that their rights are paramount when engaging with law enforcement.

But it only goes halfway. The other half lies in the attitudes of each department, because it ultimately comes down to people doing the right thing. And it's important to note that most officers do just that.

But the bill's success also lies in the citizenry itself, which is a major part of the impact this legislation could have. It is very difficult to convict someone of profiling in a court of law. On a case-by-case basis, attorneys know that it's nearly impossible to prove the intent of an officer if a person feels they've received disparate treatment. This new legislation will create a statewide data review committee; the first of its kind for Oregon. Local law enforcement agencies will be required to send copies of any profiling complaints to the state committee, which will analyze the information and report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature.

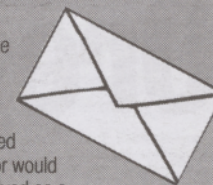
It has the potential to bring profiling out of the shadows and into the light. And it makes it a matter of public record. Because for people of color, people experiencing homelessness, for the LGBTQ community, for immigrants and refugees and others — for every extreme, sensationalized case, there are untold daily injustices.

If you think that's just the stuff of Ferguson or Baltimore, think again. The bill was introduced by Rep. Lew Frederick, a black Portlander, who told lawmakers that he's probably been stopped by police more times in single year than most of his peers have in a lifetime. In some communities in this state, he says, people "live their lives anticipating the next encounter."

Now, Oregon has the statewide platform to say "no more." Let's do this.

Write in

If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, joanne@streetroots.org. We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



Street Roots

211 NW Davis St.
Portland, OR 97209
503-228-5657
Fax: 503-227-3117
www.streetroots.org
www.news.streetroots.org
Hours: 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Sat. and 7:30-11 a.m. Sun.

Advertising

Interested in advertising in Street Roots?
Contact Israel Bayer at israel@streetroots.org

Staff

Executive Director Israel Bayer
israel@streetroots.org
Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl
joanne@streetroots.org
Vendor Coordinator Cole Merkel
cole@streetroots.org
Operations Director Sarah Beecroft
Program Assistant Grace Badik, Jesuit
Volunteer, grace@streetroots.org
Development Director Sarah Cloud
Development Assistant Ann-Derrick
Gaillot
Reporters Emily Green, Sue Zalokar,
Ann-Derrick Gaillot, Sarah Hansell, Lenora
Ko, Sam Bouman, Jared Paben
Photographers Diego Diaz, Joe Glode
Canvasser Desmond Hardison

Board of Directors

Chairman Bruce Anderson
Vice-Chairman Brad Taylor
Treasurer Heather Stadick
Secretary Amber Bielman
Directors Rich Rodgers, Michael Anderson,
Leo Rhodes, Nora Coon, Darren Alexander,
Eddie Barbosa, Rachel Langford

Volunteers

Jan Bayer, John Barker, Stacey Heath, Brian Ritchie, Anders Frederickson, Stephanie Holum, Anjali Rathore, Sam Bouman, Joanna Chase, Zoe Klingmann, Haven Herrin, Eliese Baker, Dan Jones, Rob Shyrock, Tom Ray, Doug Spangle, Susannah Kamala, Jessica Pollard, Christine Menges, Lee Ko, James Yu, Siri Carlson, Diana Richardson, Sarah Wise

If you are interested in volunteering with Street Roots, please submit a volunteer application at streetroots.org/volunteer. Or call Volunteer Coordinator Grace Badik for more information at 503-228-5657.

EDITORIAL

Legislative session a mixed bag, with room for more

In many ways this legislative session was a success, especially when you think about just how far to the right the rest of our country continues to be on social justice issues.

Creating policy that gives hard working Oregonians time off for sick leave, trying to tackle racial profiling and police accountability, and giving people easier access to birth control are just some of the important steps Oregon took this past legislative session. Legislators also supported nearly \$72 million dollars for affordable housing and programs, worked to improve our health care system and made community college more

affordable to Oregonians.

Street Roots has long advocated that state government pick up the pace and take more of a responsibility for creating and maintaining more affordable housing and increasing wages for all Oregonians.

"Oregonians in all parts of the state are realizing that housing needs to be a priority," says Janet Byrd with the Oregon Housing Alliance. "Housing is the foundation of our success: We need safe, decent and affordable housing options near employment, near school, near our families and friends. It's time to move housing to the top of our policy agenda and to hold our public systems accountable for meeting housing needs. This means evaluating every choice we make in light of how it improves our ability to meet housing needs for every Oregonian. It also means evaluating every public leader as they ask for our support and our vote against the test of whether they've done all they could possibly do to prioritize housing for those who need it most."

Yes it does.

Of course we applaud elected leaders and community efforts for all the hard work this year on many important issues. Saying that, I can't help but be disappointed that Oregon continues to play small ball on policy issues that matter most: housing, wages and job opportunities for lower and middle class folks. These issues should have been prioritized yesterday. Unfortunately, poor and working people are still unsure about tomorrow.

It was extremely disappointing to see the failure of a bill on inclusionary zoning, a policy that would have helped combat displacement and gentrification, especially in urban environments. Moreso, Gov. Kate Brown's request for \$100 million dollars for affordable housing cut down to \$40 million dollars. It may sound like a lot of money, but in the context of supporting Oregonians to maintain housing, it is a drop in the bucket.

Then there's the wage conversation. I'm convinced that many lawmakers simply aren't in touch with poor and working people and can't comprehend the devastating impact of not raising the ground floor on wages. It has everything to do horse-trading and politics and little to do with the people. It's a tragic affair. With the rising cost of housing and stagnant wages, we are collectively saying service workers, the poor and many others simply don't matter. It's unacceptable.

"Oregon has no plan for reducing poverty and has no state agency held responsible for and accountable for the extent of poverty in Oregon," says Chuck Sheketoff with the Oregon Center for Public Policy. "There's a lot of talk about addressing poverty, and they know it is a driver of other costs, but they refuse to give an agency ultimate responsibility or adopt a plan to address the issue."

It's true. It's time we changed that narrative and make a state that's equitable for everyone.



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org or follow him on Twitter @israelbayer.