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Fred Meyer

What's on your list today?

New Justice Reform Push

Aim is to redefine the role of DAs

A major new campaign to make Oregon's criminal justice system more effective, fair, and accountable was launched Sunday by the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon.

Over 100 supporters of the organization gathered in Beaverton Sunday to hear about the local chapter's "They Report to You" initiative which aims to redefine the role of the state's district attorneys in order to bring needed changes.

"At a time when President Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions are trying to turn our criminal justice system back to the 1990s, we are moving forward for reform in Oregon," said David Rogers, ACLU of Oregon executive director. "This campaign is a top priority. It will last several years and we already have staff working on it full time."

The group's initial goals are focused on increasing voters' understanding of the role that district attorneys play and increasing direct engagement between voters and DAs.

Ultimately, the campaign will push for district attorney's to increase transparency in the justice system; emphasize pre-



David Rogers

vention and treatment; focus on addressing the root causes of crime; commit to fair practices and policies; and be intentional about reducing racial disparities.

"District attorneys need to understand that there is more to accountability than building and filling prisons," said Daniel Lewkow, the ACLU campaign's manager. "Accountability includes doing what is fair and effective such as using more smart-on-crime strategies like prevention, treatment, education, and re-entry support."

The reform efforts follows progress made during the 2017 Oregon Legislature when the ACLU successfully lobbied lawmakers to pass laws designed to end law enforcement profiling, reduce unreasonably

harsh penalties for simple drug possession, limit expansion of prison populations, and make the grand jury system more accountable and transparent.

"These smart reforms all faced serious and vocal opposition from the district attorneys, yet Oregon was able to push them forward," Rogers said. "This marks a major shift in the political landscape in our state, and we're just getting started."

Nikki Fisher, executive director of The Bus Project, which is teaming up with the ACLU of Oregon on the "They Report to You" campaign, said many people do not know who their district attorneys are or what they do.

"But once they learned about the role that district attorneys play, they wanted to engage. People recognize that our criminal justice system is out of balance, and they want to see their DAs provide solutions to make the system work better," Fisher said.

The ACLU said interest in the civil rights organization has spiked since the election of Trump and membership in Oregon has quadrupled to over 40,000.

Officials said supporters have been hungry for ways to get involved and the campaign will continue to build and expand its footprint in the state over the coming months.

Hardesty Runs as Unity Candidate

A long time political leader in Portland and member of Portland's African American community kicked off an election campaign for a position on the Portland City Council Saturday with a rally drawing a large group of supporters.

Former state representative and current president of the Portland NAACP Jo Ann Hardesty says she is running to make sure all voices and every walk of life is represented at City Hall.

"This is the voice of One Portland," said Hardesty. "We mean to unite our town, to be a beacon of enlightenment shining across



Jo Ann Hardesty

our country. We cannot be silent as dark clouds of racism and hatred roll out from some places. That is what this campaign is about."

The high energy event at the Mt. Scott Community Center was opened by Oregon Music Hall of Fame Inductee Norman Sylvester and his band, and featured short rousing talks by Rev. LeRoy Haynes, a Portland black pastor who leads efforts for police justice reforms in Oregon and is a member of the Albina Ministerial Alliance, and Hardesty.

Volunteers with clipboards and campaign messages then went into local neighborhoods to listen to Portlanders' concerns and invite them to be a part of the Hardesty campaign.