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Crime Rates Falling

AG Ellen Rosenblum signals support for sentencing reforms

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

Property and violent crime fell by 25 percent between 2000 and 2010. Yet, unless state corrections policies change, Oregon is on track to add 2,000 more prison beds over the next decade, at a cost of \$600 million. That's on top of the existing \$1.4 billion corrections budget.

Last Saturday, Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum signaled she is prepared to back major revisions to sentencing guidelines, including those mandated by voters through Measure 11 in 1994 and Measure 57 in 2008.

"Nothing — Nothing is sacred," Rosenblum told a statewide gathering of the Partnership for Safety and Justice in Keizer Oregon, Sept. 8. "All of our state's felony sentencing structure has to be on the table for review."

Calling the rising costs unsustainable, Gov. Kitzhaber last year tasked Oregon's Commission on Public Safety with reviewing sentencing policy. The commission is expected to issue recommendations towards the end of 2012, with draft legislation expected in 2013.

Research by the Pew Center for the States, found more than 50 percent of the expected rise in Oregon's prison population would constitute people convicted of property crimes (36 percent) and drugs charges (17 percent). The same study shows that 66 percent of people imprisoned in 2011 were rated as low or medium risk, up from 55 percent in 2005.

Rosenblum contrasted spiraling prison spending with cuts to victims' services. More than 20,600 requests for emergency shelter from victims of domestic violence were turned down in 2011, for example.

"We need to invest in life-saving services for victims, not only because it's smart spending, but because it's the right thing to do," she said. "We need to take a long hard

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FLUORIDE: YES



PHOTO BY LISALOVING

Portland City Council has voted to add fluoride to the city's water supply in a unanimous 5-0 vote Wednesday, Sept. 12. At least eight protesters opposing fluoridation were ejected from the council meeting after shouting at commissioners, who said the issue has caused more dissension than almost any other.

Voter ID: The Battle Comes to Oregon

It's a campaign to persuade voters the elections are rife with abuse

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

Since 2006, 30 states have passed laws that require voters to show identification at the polls. Advocates argue stricter laws are needed to prevent voting fraud. Opponents reply that voter ID laws will prevent millions of Americans from voting, hurting poor and minority communities most, not to mention U.S. democracy.

Oregon, has sidestepped the controversy — so far. But a group

of activists, connected to the right-wing Cascade Policy Institute and the Oregon Tea Party, is trying to change that. The U-Choose Education Forum has issued a six-point criticism of Oregon elections with suggestions it calls, "improvements," — including requiring voter ID.

The move is the first step in a campaign intended to persuade Oregonians that the state's election system is rife with abuse. Next step is a meeting, titled, "When Does 1 and 1 make 3?"

"Learn about the wide-spread

possibilities of massive election fraud and what you can do about it!" runs the blurb on the group's website. The meeting is set for 6:30 - 9 p.m., Sept. 26 at 4101 Kruse Way, Lake Oswego.

"First we are surveying all office holders and legislators in the state and asking for their comments," said Chana Cox, a retired Lewis and Clark professor and U-Choose group founder. "We'd like to refine these proposals so they can be passed next session."

Well, pigs might fly. But voter

ID is unlikely to get traction in Oregon. Neither Kate Brown nor her opponent in the Secretary of State's race, Knute Buehler, are campaigning on the issue. In fact, both candidates have publicly rejected calls for stricter voter ID, saying that Oregon's signature matching system works as well as any other identification.

"Every signature, on every ballot is checked by highly trained election staff," Brown said in a statement. "A bar code

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Pot Could Be Tax Windfall, but Skeptics

Since no state has legalized marijuana for anything but medical

By Kristen Wyatt
and Jonathan J. Cooper
The Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A catchy pro-marijuana jingle for Colorado voters considering legalizing the drug goes like this: "Jobs for our people. Money for schools. Who could ask for more?"

It's a bit more complicated than that in the

three states — Colorado, Oregon and Washington — that could become the first to legalize marijuana this fall.

The debate over how much tax money recreational marijuana laws could produce is playing an outsized role in the campaigns for and against legalization — and both sides concede they're not really sure what would happen.

At one extreme, pro-pot campaigners say

it could prove a windfall for cash-strapped states with new taxes on pot and reduced criminal justice costs.

At the other, state government skeptics warn legalization would lead to costly legal battles and expensive new bureaucracies to regulate marijuana.

In all three states asking voters to decide

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