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# THE BIG FLOAT



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Hundreds of people participated in the Big Float July 15 on the Willamette River. The annual fundraiser for the Human Access Project featured a parade and "Portland's Grandest Beach Party," which included a music barge, live music, food carts, a beer/wine garden, sponsor booths and an activities area for the kids.

## State Reduces Drug Possession Offenses

### New law addresses racial disparities in drug enforcement, incarceration

By *Melanie Sevckenko*  
Of *The Skanner News*

Oregon legislatures passed a landmark bill this week that reclassifies small scale possession of illegal drugs – heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and others – from a felony to a misdemeanor. The reclassification is part of a broader trend to “defelonization,” with 18 states having already defelonized small possession of drugs. “Oregon’s victory is a significant part of the national shift towards smarter justice. We’ll see more and more states moving in this direction,” said Emily Kaltenbach, senior director of Criminal Justice Reform Strategy at Drug Policy Alliance, a national advocacy group. As the law stands now in Oregon, small possession is a Class B or C felony – punishable by up to 10 or

20 years in prison and \$250,000 or \$375,000 in fines.

The new legislation knocks down small possession to a Class A misdemeanor, which could result in one year in jail and/or a \$6,250 fine.

Last March, the ACLU of Oregon conducted a poll which found that 73 percent of state voters overwhelmingly favored changing small scale possession charges from a felony to a misdemeanor.

It seems the state legislature felt the same way.

Passing such a bill is an attempt to address mass incarceration, as well as racial disparities, connected to life-damaging drug charges.

“Drug sentences, felonies in particular, end up being life time sentences in our society, not just short term ‘debts paid to society,’” said Sen. Lew Frederick, who has vocally supported the bill.



PHOTO: NIKKI DAVID / NEON TOMMY

Rally to end the War on Drugs, MacArthur Park, Los Angeles, Nov. 3, 2011.

According to the Drug Policy Alliance, U.S. law enforcement makes at least 1.2 million arrests on drug possession every year. On any given night, at least 133,000 people are behind bars in U.S. prisons and jails for

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## Proposed Policy Revives and Extends 48-Hour Rule

### Wheeler asks DA's office to consider alternatives to last week's ruling

The *Skanner News Staff*

Last week the Portland Police Bureau proposed a policy change that could delay police interviews of officers involved in deadly force – possibly by weeks. Mayor Ted Wheeler is pushing

back, but has declined activists' request for a hearing on the matter.

The union contract between the Portland Police Association and the city last fall did away with the “48-hour rule” – a clause allowing officers to wait two days before giv-

ing a statement after being involved in deadly use of force cases. Wheeler had promised to do away with the rule during his campaign.

PPB's proposed change is based on Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill's citation of

an Oregon Supreme Court ruling that he says requires internal investigators to wait until after a criminal investigation and grand jury review have been completed before they can compel a statement from officers. He's said he won't

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PHOTO BY MELANIE SEVCENKO

Shafia M. Monroe speaks at the Midwives, Others and Mothers Alliance (MOMA) Against Police Violence press conference.

## Midwives Meet on Police Violence

Black women and girls account for 33 percent of all women killed by police

By *Melanie Sevckenko*  
Of *The Skanner News*

Birth workers, mothers and community members convened in Northeast Portland last Friday to address the incidents of abuse against pregnant and postpartum women of color at the hand of police.

Under the recently formed initiative, Midwives, Others, and Mothers Alliance, the press conference was organized by African American midwife and activist Shafia M. Monroe in response to the killing of Charleena Lyles by Seattle police last month.

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AP PHOTO/EVAN VUCCI

In this July 7 file photo, President Donald Trump meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G20 Summit in Hamburg, Germany. Trump had a second, previously undisclosed conversation with Putin at the summit in Germany.

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