



## John S. Foote, District Attorney for Clackamas County

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

- Unfortunately Oregon ACLU has apparently been transformed into a radical political action committee. It has started a political campaign to target elected District Attorneys during the upcoming election cycle. In a democracy it is completely appropriate [for a political action committee, but not for a non-profit as ACLU claims to be](#). To make matters worse, Oregon ACLU is spending significant amounts of money to spread claims around the state that are false and misleading.
- Oregon ACLU claims that Oregon's criminal justice system is a "mess." It claims people are being "put behind bars for being mentally ill or addicted to drugs." It claims that people of color are being sentenced "much more harshly." It claims that the current system "isn't working." None of those claims are backed by facts and when the facts are examined, it is clear they are patently false. For the facts, see the report by the Oregon District Attorneys Association entitled, "***Oregon's Criminal Justice System in 2016: A Continuing Success Story***" which is filled with facts and data to support every assertion. It is attached to this statement.
- Contrary to the claims of the ACLU, Oregon is the safest it has been in 50 years. Crime is at historic lows. Oregon's incarceration rate is well below the national average and dropping. Oregon successfully reserves its prisons for violent criminals, more than any other state in the country. Today Oregon crime victims can seek justice and fairness through their constitutionally protected rights.
- In Oregon no one is sent to prison for drug addiction or mental illness. In Oregon less than 24% of all convicted felons receive a prison sentence. Offenders convicted of simple drug possession are ineligible for a prison sentence. That is the law and has been for more than 28 years. There are many protections for the mentally ill in the criminal justice system. There are local mental health courts in most counties, many of them started by prosecutors. The only mentally ill people in prison are those who have raped, murdered or maimed innocent victims. And even then they are only in prison if a judge or jury determines they are legally sane.

- Oregon's racial disparity in its prison population has dropped dramatically since 1995 when Measure 11 for violent crimes was overwhelmingly passed by the voters. Oregon ACLU will never tell you that mandatory minimum sentences for violent crime reduces racial disparity because it does not fit its overall radical anti-incarceration philosophy.
- Oregon's ACLU mistakenly believes that targeting elected District Attorneys with false information will help anti-incarceration advocates take over our system of justice. It claims that Oregon's District Attorneys need to be "held accountable" and that they need to "remember who they report to". What they don't understand is that Oregon's District Attorneys fully understand who we work for, the citizens in each of our counties. We talk to them every minute of every day. We hear their views, concerns and wishes every day. We talk to victims every day. We represent their values in court. We attempt to provide our communities a sense of justice in each case we prosecute. We want to be held accountable.
- Oregon ACLU has initiated a political campaign right at the start of the current election cycle. *They are accountable to no one but their board, who never face the voters in an election. In fact, the type of policies that it proposes, when actually put before the people, have been uniformly rejected by resounding majorities.* Oregon ACLU's purpose is not to provide accurate information. Its purpose is to push a radical anti-incarceration agenda. If successful, it will damage the significant progress our criminal justice system has achieved in the past three decades. The real losers will be crime victims and our communities.

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