

Oregon Voices News

News from Oregon that you can use

Oregon Voices is committed to justice and rationality in policies regarding sex offenses and will continue to work toward supporting legislation that will positively impact the lives of registered citizens and their families. We continue to support the efforts of other organizations that are also striving to make lives better for AICs and those reentering our communities.

Change is happening! The Board of Oregon Voices has grown and these additional members bring new ideas and energy as we continue to seek ways to help registrants. The *Relief From the Registry Handbook* has been published and is now accessible on the OV website. There has been a lot of confusion surrounding expungement of crimes in Oregon vs. relief from the registry. Information included in this newsletter will help identify the differences.

Oregon Voices, the Past and the Future

A history of Oregon Voices in a former newsletter began by recounting how in 2009, two moms, both overwhelmed by their son's arrests for sex offenses, found each other and cried together. That was the beginning of what became Oregon Voices. Providing mutual support and the knowledge that we are not alone are still important aspects of what we do.

Within a few months, a small group began to meet. One of the moms was an attorney. She suggested we could have the most impact by focusing on state legislation. And the timing was perfect. In 2011 two bills were introduced in the legislature. One would have put everyone on the Oregon registry on-line. The other would have set up 1000' residency restrictions for all registrants. Our small group gave testimony against both bills before the House legislative committee, and in the process we met others who were there to do the same thing. And the group of legislators who listened killed the bills and set up an interim work group that drafted HB 2549 in 2013. It passed and set up our current system which assigned registrants to a risk level, each with different restrictions, and a chance to get off the registry.

But to use an old expression, ain't nothin' easy. There were many who fought this new system. The DA's and others managed to make getting off the registry a very complicated process. It took a number of years just to implement the system under the parole board, using the Static 99R, as stipulated by the legislation. But the relief process has been glacially slow. Thankfully, the great majority of those who apply are being granted relief.

In the meantime, however, partly due to the large number who were sentenced under Measure 11 reentering from prison, the registry has grown rapidly, and rather than shrinking the registry as was hoped, it has basically doubled. In the meantime, Covid happened and there was little opportunity to make contact with legislators. Now there are new people in the legislature who don't know the history of this process and OV has lost a lot of the contacts we had.

So where are we now? Somewhere between 17,000 and 20,000 historical registrants remain unscored and many of them have been on the registry for over 20 years. And the Static 99R, which was adopted by Oregon in 2013, now has additions to their protocol. New research on what they call their desistance data shows that the risk of reoffense declines predictably over time. That data could lead to the removal of many of those who remain unscored, but it is not recognized in current law. Oregon Voices would love to see that added.

Although our numbers have grown over the years, we are still a small group. Our Board is aging. Legislative contacts need to be renewed and new contacts made. In the last months we have been able to add several new (and younger) Board members. Some are working on increasing our digital presence. Others we hope will help us to make new legislative contacts and perhaps have a bill introduced to add the desistance data and get more people off the registry automatically.

We may need to call on more of you to contact legislators to help move the process forward. And we would value any ideas you have as to directions we should go. Thank you for joining us in this ongoing work. You may reach us at info@oregonvoices.org

2024 Legislative Report

Every year, Oregon Voices organizes a committee to keep close tabs on what is happening during the legislative session. These individuals serve as watchdogs, keeping a close eye on the bills that are introduced, especially ones that might cause harm to Registered Citizens. They alert the rest of us to write letters and/or to testify at hearings whenever necessary.

Here are some of the bills that OV followed which were introduced and enacted into law. Please go to the OLIS website if you want more information about them:
<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov>

HB 4160-B: Extends the prohibition on sexual conduct by educators involving (high school) students from 90 days to one year after graduation or leaving school.

HB 4164: Modifies requirements for institutions of higher learning to provide support services for victims of sexual misconduct and how they assess and report such.

HB 4156: Expands stalking and when it becomes a felony. Modifies definitions and circumstances of such.

HB 4146B: Allows those who petition for a restraining order in matters of Family Abuse, Disabilities Abuse, Elder Abuse, or Sexual Abuse to now file in the county where the abuse happened. Also modifies and further defines "electronic imaging" abuse.

HB 4086A: Requires DHS to study the scope of child abuse and to study the way Oregon responds to children exhibiting problematic sexual behaviors.

SB 1574 A: Omnibus "public safety" bill with many topics. One makes "abuse of a corpse involving sexual activity" now a sexual crime requiring reporting to the Registry. Also (whew!) fixes what could have been a BIG no-no about State agencies now being required to have open, transparent meetings. This bill clarifies that this openness does NOT apply to Parole Board and Post Prison Supervision Board meetings, and those will continue as private, not available online.

Luckily, some suspicious/scary bills did not get very far. Sadly, the bills about Compassionate Care and Expungement did not make it all the way through; however, there was some positive support, which was encouraging.

We are very careful as we track bills. It is important work and we welcome anyone who would like to help us during the 2025 legislative session. We also support other non-profit organizations when they introduce bills that have a positive impact on our communities. If you are interested in participating on this committee during the 2025 legislative session, please contact us at info@oregonvoices.org

The Oregon Relief from the Registry Handbook

The Relief Handbook has undergone an update, and we now realize that as laws and procedures change, it will need ongoing updates. We are working for change in current laws, and the procedures of the Board of Parole will continue to evolve as circumstances change.

If you haven't yet considered whether you might be eligible for relief or reclassification, check out the Handbook. If you have thought about it, but haven't done anything about it yet, check out the Handbook. It will help you break a complicated process down into smaller, manageable steps. And if you are already working on your own relief application, check out the new draft of the Handbook to make sure that you are following the current rules.

And the big news here for anyone who was at the last general meeting is that historical registrants who have not yet been scored still can apply and get scored in the process. The information we conveyed at the last general meeting was the result of a misunderstanding. So if you think you may be eligible and that you may be scored as a level 1, begin the process now. If you have specific questions about the relief process or about the Handbook, address them to info@oregonvoices.org.

We are doing this work because we want everyone who is eligible to be able to petition successfully for relief or for reclassification.

Desistance Data

What Does It Mean for Historical Registrants

The study referred to on page 2 and published in 2018 set out to determine if people who committed sex offences and were now out of prison and living in their communities were a risk and does the risk of reoffense decline predictably over a period of time? In other words, it makes common sense that if people living in a community haven't re-offended over a period of ten years, they are probably less risky than the people who just got out of prison. The study found that risk did decline predictably and that it didn't matter if you were high risk or low risk when you got out of prison. They found that for every five years since you returned to your community, your risk of reoffending declined by 50%, and that by ten years out you represent only a quarter of the risk of reoffending. Twenty years out, even those people who were considered high risk hadn't reoffended. This tells us that nobody should be on the registry after twenty years. Our goal is to get these historical registrants off the registry. We are urging legislators to look at this data from the Static 99 research team and find ways to speed up relief from the registry for those historical registrants. Right now, Oregon is adding more individuals to the registry in a month than the system can get off in a year.

Expungement FAQ Coming Soon to the Website

Oregon Voices has been getting more questions about expungement in recent months, and in response to that interest, we have a draft FAQ document that we hope to have up on the website soon.

Many registered citizens may not understand the difference between *expungement* and *relief from registration*. Quite simply, petitions to get relief from the obligation to register are handled by the Oregon Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision. A successful application for relief removes one's name from the Sex Offense Registry in Oregon. Expungement, on the other hand, is a process that removes a conviction from the record—as if the conviction never happened.

Many criminal justice attorneys are familiar with the process of expungement and can help a person through the process. The Oregon Justice Resource Center also has information on how one can obtain expungement, and there are volunteer clinics in several of the most populous Oregon counties (Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington and Marion) who help individuals through the process.

Only a limited number of low-level sex crimes are expungable, and then usually only after relief from registration has been granted. But if one has other convictions besides a sex offense, it can be useful to seek expungement of those before one applies for relief from registration. The FAQ, when we have it up on the website, will provide help in understanding what crimes are expungable and what waiting periods are required before one applies.

Are your eyes crossing yet? Do not despair. The forthcoming FAQ page is designed to help you understand what is expungable, when it is possible to apply, and where one can get assistance with the process.

A Message of Inspiration From One of Our Oregon Registrants

A couple of years ago, an OV individual expressed his feelings via an email about being a registered citizen. Recently, he reported that he is now ready to seek relief from the registry. He has worked hard to prepare for this next step in his life and we wish him well.

It is worth revisiting his message because it truly gives us something to think about.

During my lunch break on a Thursday night, I was watching a video and one of the comments made me realize a very important point. " Always remember: happy people are hard to control. Miserable people are easy to control. If someone likes to make you unhappy, run like hell." It is so important to keep doing the things that make us happy, even though we are in the situation we are in with the registry. It then dawned on me that the registry ISN'T about keeping the community safe (as we all know), it's about segmenting and compartmentalizing people. If you're an RC, you are bad. If you're not an RC, you are good. I was out taking photos of the moon and playing with light (taking extended time exposures of the roadways at night), getting really awesome pictures. While I was out doing that, I realized that instead of knocking on RCs' doors to "verify" that they live where they say they do, the law enforcement community could be setting up all kinds of surveillance to catch all the street racers in my area alone (which I hear all the time now). So we must not let them drag us down with their message. Anyone can change.

Photos submitted by one of our registrants who has faithfully participated in Oregon Voices.



Freedom to Explore



Intricacies of the Dragonfly



Inspiration

i	n	s	i	d	e	r	s
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Good News For AICs Transitioning Out of Prison!

As of Tuesday, July 3, the U.S. Department of Justice announced that Medicaid would be made available to inmates up to 90 days before they transition out of prison in five different states: Illinois, Kentucky, Oregon, Utah, and Vermont. This allows these individuals to have access to the health care services that they need.

This is such good news for AICs here in Oregon. This new opportunity allows our state to cover services not otherwise covered under Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Programs. The coverage includes substance use disorder treatment, chronic health conditions, and other health concerns that can impact public safety.

Oregon Voices has long advocated for wrap-around services as AICs transition back to their communities. We know that programs like Sponsors in Eugene and Free on The Outside in the Clackamas area make a difference because they offer a variety of support systems. Housing, employment, and also the ability to access health care services play crucial roles in successfully transitioning from prison to life on the outside.

Vikki Wachino, the executive director of the Health and Reentry Project said, "Evidence suggests that access to health care during the critical reentry period can improve health, save lives, reduce recidivism rates, and contribute to public safety."

This is a very positive step for those transitioning out of prison and it is gratifying to know that Oregon was chosen as one of the five states to receive Medicaid and state benefits for the health care that these individuals need.

For more information, check out the following links:

www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/hhs-authorizes-five-states-provide-historic-health-care-coverage-people-transitioning-out

www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/3069636/five-states-grant-medicaid-released-prisoners/

Federal Legislation Introduced to Reauthorize Critical Reentry Grant Programs From the Second Chance Act of 2008.

A bi-partisan committee of U.S. Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), John Cornyn (R-TX), and Peter Welch (D-VT) introduced legislation to reauthorize critical reentry grant programs for the Second Chance Act of 2008, including services and supports for housing, childcare, career training and the treatment for

substance use disorders and/or mental illness. It is referred to as *The Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2024* (S-4477).

The U.S. Senate passed this piece of legislation on June 5, 2024 but it got stalled in the House. We are hopeful that it will move forward. You can find detailed information about this legislation on the following websites: <https://www.booker.senate.gov/news> (You will have to scroll down to June 05, 2024).

Council of State Governments: <https://www.capito.senate.gov/news/press-releases/capito-leads-bipartisan-effort-to-enhance-reentry-programs-promote-public-safety>

Are You Thinking of Traveling Out-of-State? Check the Laws Before You Go

During the last few OV General meetings, there have been several questions about traveling within the United States. Some registrants want to go to another state to visit friends and relatives; others simply would like to enjoy a short vacation.

It is important to remember that each state has its own laws regarding registration requirements; therefore, you need to find out what those are before you plan to visit or pass through one or more because you could end up on their registries and that is not something that you would want to happen. Registrants and their families are encouraged to visit the NARSOL website (National Association for Rational Sex Offense Laws), of which OV is an affiliate, and click on the link “Travel” where you will find a wealth of information.

Oregon’s Fearless Group: A Safe Place to Share Stories And Gain A Renewed Sense of Hope and Empowerment

A personal message from one of the founders.

Fearless groups are active in several states across the country. By definition, a Fearless group is a place for those of us who are registrants and feel marginalized and ostracized by society.

It is a place to come together to share stories of hope and empowerment. It is a safe place to share our stories, educate each other, learn about advocacy, and our civil rights, and succeed and be successful despite the restraints placed on us. It is a place to connect and make new friends.

Fearless Oregon got its start in March 2022 when I moved here and felt that there was a need for such a group locally. Thus, two others and myself began meeting once a month and are now joined, on average, between ten and fifteen members. While the majority of participants are from Oregon, we also have regulars from Idaho, Washington, and Utah.

The Fearless group meets on the last Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm PST. Everyone is allowed to speak, or just listen. We are not a therapy group, nor do we give psychological advice. In addition, we do not offer legal advice. However, we will offer a referral if needed.

All meetings are conducted via Zoom. Everyone is welcome! Registrants, spouses, partners, family members, friends, or supporters.

Come join us for camaraderie and a safe place to talk. If you have any questions, please contact me (David) through info@oregonvoices.org

The 2024 NARSOL Conference Was Well Attended

The 2024 Conference of the National Association of Rational Sex Offences Laws (NARSOL) was held in Atlanta, GA. over a four-day period in June. This conference was well attended, with close to two hundred people. There were over twenty-five states represented and the Western states had a strong presence at the conference, including but not limited to Oregon.

Multiple speakers presented over the four days providing attendees with a wealth of knowledge in their respective fields. For example, an attorney from the ACLU in Michigan was extremely well received as he gave a vibrant overview of pending and anticipated lawsuits. The attorney, while hopeful about ending or modifying some of the draconian laws that impact all of us, painted a realistic picture of the uphill battle.

Other speakers provided information and support for families, one speaker spoke of jettisoning the shame that is felt, while yet another provided information on domestic and international travel for those on the registry.

As important as the speakers were for us, the camaraderie, the socializing with old friends and meeting new ones were highlights for many of us. Several opportunities were provided to mingle with other attendees such as during an evening playing bingo along with karaoke.

In addition, the board of directors was available to anyone who wanted to speak with them or make a suggestion. This was my fourth conference and I think it was the best one I have attended. It was well organized, ran smoothly, and everyone had a great time.

The next conference will be held in Grand Rapids, MI, in June 2025. For more information, check out their website: www.narsol.org

Sources of Important Information

Reducing Barriers to HUD-Assisted Housing

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/10/2024-06218/reducing-barriers-to-hud-assisted-housing>

Oregon Justice Resource Center has begun a campaign to end the use of solitary confinement in the Oregon DOC. You can read about it and take action

here: <https://act.newmode.net/action/oregon-justice-resource-center/tell-odoc-end-use-solitary-confinement-prison>

Last, But Not Least

Help is always needed to work on such issues as housing, employment, education, legal resources, the website, legislation and the OV newsletter. If you would like more information about Oregon Voices or wish to volunteer in some capacity, please call 971-317-6868, or email: info@oregonvoices.org

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