

## Securing Our Safety

We want your input to create:

*"A Citizen-voiced plan to provide for a secure, stable and sustainable Josephine County"*

[www.SecuringOurSafety.org](http://www.SecuringOurSafety.org)

December 19, 2012

Representative Wally Hicks  
Oregon House of Representatives  
Grants Pass, District 3



Dear Wally,

As you are well aware, Securing Our Safety (SOS) is a non-profit that formed in 2012 for the purposes of research and education on how to help our County provide the services that are required for a "secure, stable, and sustainable Josephine County." To date our efforts have focused mostly on the local Criminal Justice program challenges as the Criminal Justice System is one of the key infrastructure components for our County along with the basic requirements of schools, roads, utilities and other core community needs.

Thank you for your recent suggestion of submitting legislative ideas that could help our community solve some of its public safety challenges. As a non-profit, we are dedicated to research and education so SOS will not be acting in a political capacity or advocating for specific legislation or specific ballot measures. But our members have done a lot of research on specific areas that could help our local public safety funding challenges, and we would like to document for your information some road blocks that could be cleared through your upcoming legislative sessions should you decide to take this research and put it into action.

SOS and its members and subcommittees have through our research documented a number of ways that Oregon State laws are a road block for solving our local public safety challenges. We have also documented ways new laws could provide a potential avenue leading toward local public safety solutions. SOS has approximately 50-70 active members that have weighed in on these areas, over 400 local citizens that have participated with SOS in some format or by our local email list, and we have collected nearly 1200 survey results from local citizens on the level of service and funding methods for our local criminal justice programs. SOS members have given me permission to pass along some of our research to you.

The following state law considerations were documented during our research process in the last seven months:

- 1) **State Lottery Funds:** The State's Lottery revenues are largely unrestricted (although a certain smaller percentage has to be spent in certain ways). The problem for Josephine County is that in many years, \$10-\$12 million per year of lottery revenues are collected in Josephine County but are not returned to Josephine County (spent elsewhere in the State in many years). That is not to say this is the case every year because in some years some of these funds may have helped shore up the schools' budgets, but it would appear that over time the net revenues of state lottery funds collected locally are more often than not spent elsewhere in the state.

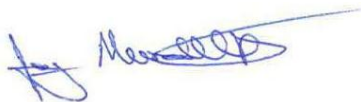
I have attended at least one presentation by the Governor in the last year about his plan to return control of services to local agencies, which makes a lot of sense because local agencies know best how to service local citizens. Allowing more of the state's net lottery collections to return to the Counties where they were collected to address the highest priority public needs is a perfect example of how the Governor's desires could be implemented.

While this could require a constitutional change to restrict a certain percentage of local lottery collections for use in the Counties where they were collected, please consider ways we could restrict a mere 25% minimum of the net revenues to be spent locally in each County. Bring those funds back under the control of each County government based on collections in those Counties and restrict its use to the core government services: Public Safety or Schools (to be determined by each County Board based on what they know to be the greatest local need). Each County would be able to use those funds to meet basic public safety or schooling needs that are of the highest priority in each County. As a result those dollars will be more effectively allocated to the greatest local needs.

- 2) **State citation revenue sharing:** One of the areas SOS is in the process of researching is the feasibility of a local justice of the peace court. So far it appears this may not pencil out financially even though it could significantly help our local criminal justice system by being able to prosecute traffic or other lower level crimes/citations. The road block here is the State's new \$60 fee on all citations (that is the State takes the first \$60 of every citation before the locality of the Justice of the Peace Court or Muni Court gets to share in any of that revenue). With such a high rate of uncollected accounts through these tickets, in this scenario the state makes money but the localities many times lose money. The fee was recently increased to \$60 and the State should consider dropping that to say \$40 or some other number that allows a more equitable sharing to take place. As it stands today, Josephine County would probably not benefit from a Justice of the Peace court due to this \$60 fee from the state.
  
- 3) **Vehicle tags / DMV fees:** As it stands today, Counties have a way to add a fee on to the State's DMV fee to be collected and returned for specific local use. However, as we understand it today any fee attached to a DMV fee that is assessed locally can only be used for road related purposes (spent only on transportation infrastructure locally). As Public Safety agencies are a big part of keeping our roads safe, a new State law that allows Counties to assess an additional DMV fee to be used locally for either public safety or transportation needs would provide financially challenged Counties such as Josephine County much more flexibility in dealing with public safety funding challenges.

These are the three main areas that we encountered in our research that we thought we would bring to your attention. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this list.

Sincerely,



Jay Meredith, President and Board Chair  
Securing Our Safety, Inc.  
[SecuringOurSafety@gmail.com](mailto:SecuringOurSafety@gmail.com)