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Senate passes major public safety reform legislation

HB 3194A contains consensus changes that will make Oregon communities safer and save taxpayer money

SALEM—The Oregon Senate today passed a bipartisan public safety reform measure that allows for more investments in community public safety by controlling the growth of Oregon’s prison population for at least five years. House Bill 3194A, which passed the Senate on a vote of 19-11, is supported by victims’ rights advocates, law enforcement entities, and other groups concerned with improving community public safety.

“This bipartisan bill achieves a balance between making sure that criminals are held accountable for their actions and ensuring that we have adequate resources to fight crime in our communities,” said Senator Floyd Prozanski, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Public Safety. “In crafting this legislation, we relied on evidence-based policies to give local law enforcement, drug courts, and community corrections more resources to keep Oregonians safe.”

House Bill 3194A expands probation programs for lesser nonviolent offenses such as marijuana possession and other drug offenses, while prioritizing prison beds for serious violent offenders. The bill is estimated to produce a minimum of \$326 million in reduced costs at the Department of Corrections over the next ten years.

Without the provisions in HB 3194A, prisons are predicted to grow by 2,000 inmates over the coming decade, at the expense of prevention programs and other critical state services such as education and health care. A broad coalition of advocates from across the political spectrum have urged action to rein in prison growth and spending by passing HB 3194A.

“Oregonians expect their government to protect them and keep their communities safe and livable,” said Prozanski. “That’s why so many of us have put aside our differences and come together to support these targeted reforms and reinvestments in our public safety system. As a result, we will be able to make sure serious offenders are punished for their crimes, while investing more in prevention and probation programs to stop crime from happening in the first place.”

House Bill 3194A will now proceed to Governor John A. Kitzhaber for his approval.

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