



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Thatcher's juvenile justice reform bill passes unanimously

SALEM, Ore.-Today, the Senate unanimously passed a bipartisan juvenile justice reform proposal, [Senate Bill 846](#), chief-sponsored by state Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer. The bill will put an end to the practice of unnecessarily shackling youth in courtrooms.

Thatcher applauded her colleagues and expressed hope for the bill's passage in the House of Representatives:

"Our juvenile justice system must focus on positive outcomes and this bill helps bring our justice system out of the dark ages. Both sides of the aisle agree we do not want to see indiscriminate shackling and belly-chaining youth in court for non-violent crimes. Oregonians need to know that policy work can bring together both sides of the aisle and public policy shouldn't be about politics. I'm looking forward to the bill being signed into law."

According to the [National Juvenile Defender Center](#):

"When youth are not automatically restrained in court, they have better communication with all parties in the courtroom and understanding of the process, can participate in their own defense, and the rehabilitative purpose of juvenile court may be met."

"Youths who contact the justice system typically have experienced far more numerous and severe traumatic events in their young lives and are disproportionately more likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or other mental or emotional disorders when compared to other youth in the general population," [said](#) Youth, Rights & Justice Executive Director Mark McKechnie.

According to Amy Miller with [Oregon Office of Public Defense Services](#):

"Since the 1995 opinion in Millican, the issue of shackling juveniles has prompted much discussion, debate, and reform in Oregon and across the county. According to the National Juvenile Defender Center's Campaign Against Indiscriminate Juvenile Shackling, 23 states have limited juvenile shackling through legislation, court rule, or case law. Oregon is the only western region state which has not limited indiscriminate juvenile shackling."

John Collins, the presiding judge of the Yamhill County Circuit Court of the State of Oregon explained in his [opinion](#):

"The report also points out that 'shackling of juveniles in courtroom proceedings is antithetical to the juvenile court goal of rehabilitation and treatment.' Psychological and medical experts have rendered opinions in pleadings and evidentiary hearings in jurisdictions where this issue has been litigated. They opine that children suffer emotionally, psychologically and medically when held in restraints similar to those used in this county."

The public hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee can be viewed [here](#).

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