



## SENATE REPUBLICAN OFFICE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 11, 2017

Jonathan Lockwood  
Communications Director  
971-645-2140

### **Thatcher fights for jailed intimate terrorism victims** ***Women behind bars after coercion by abusers to break law***

SALEM, Ore.-Intimate terrorism, which includes both physical and emotional abuse, can lead women to commit crimes they otherwise would not. Incarcerated and formerly-incarcerated women have broken laws or were at the scene of a crime because they were pressured, coerced or threatened by a domestically violent partner. Republican state Sen. Kim Thatcher, of Keizer, carried [House Bill 3176-A](#) in the Senate, which passed today unanimously, to help women in these crisis situations.

#### **Thatcher released the following statement:**

"My heart broke when I heard these horrific stories, where women who were not criminals, who had no criminal history, were subjected to violence and abuse, even sex trafficking, and then forced to break the law. Criminal justice reform is a bipartisan issue, and House Bill 3176 is a bipartisan, bicameral approach to help fix our state's laws. It truly sorts the victims from the criminals."

Attorney Julia Yoshimoto, director of the Women in Prison Project and Reentry Law Project Oregon Justice Resource Center, has provided civil reentry legal services to women incarcerated in Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF). [She's heard directly from incarcerated women and formerly incarcerated women about the circumstances that led to their imprisonment.](#)

In 2007, a study by Western Michigan University looked at women on probation and parole in Lane County, Oregon. Women who answered affirmatively to a few abuse-related screening questions were interviewed and their data collected.

The report concluded that the women appeared to have experienced intimate terrorism and it highlighted that in Lane County, 29 percent of women on probation or parole reported that they "committed a crime because they were threatened by their partner." This conforms with past studies of incarcerated women that have found "relationships with men were at the core of their offending behavior." The full Western Michigan University report can be fully

viewed [here](#).

[Yoshimoto shared with members of the Senate](#) that one woman found herself in an abusive relationship with a partner who began committing crimes related to his drug addiction. She says that the continuous threats and physical abuse led woman to feel scared, but trapped in the relationship, and led to her imprisonment.

"This woman, who had steady employment her whole adult life, had always been the primary caregiver for her minor children, and had no criminal record, was convicted and sentenced to a prison term of over eight years," Yoshimoto said.

In Oregon, when a person is convicted of a misdemeanor the [courts have broad discretion to impose sentences within applicable maximums](#). When one is convicted of a Class A misdemeanor, courts may impose up to a one-year sentence, a fine of up to \$6,250, or both.

When it comes to felonies, courts may impose a departure from a presumptive sentence based on substantial and compelling reasons. In these types of decisions, under House Bill 3176-A, sentencing courts would be allowed to consider whether a defendant was coerced by a domestically violent person, or, if the defendant was sex trafficked, or, if the defendant was the victim of abuse.

"This is a notable first step toward recognizing the role domestic violence plays in women's intersection with the criminal justice system," Yoshimoto added.



###