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# Kitzhaber wants to spend millions to fight youth crime

By PETER WONG  
of the Mail Tribune

SALEM — Gov. John Kitzhaber says it's now up to the Legislature to approve \$30 million he wants to help Oregon's 36 counties reduce or prevent juvenile crime.

Jackson County would be in line for \$1.5 million in the next two years, and Josephine County \$600,000. Their plans, which were submitted with others Friday to Kitzhaber, propose a variety of measures to reduce arrest rates per 1,000 people under age 18. Both have 1996-97 rates above the state average and their own five-year averages.

"I think these plans add a lot of credibility" to his budget request, Kitzhaber said at a news conference, where he was flanked by city, county and law enforcement officials. "I hope that the Legislature will take note of the fact that this money goes down to individual counties to fund plans that were developed locally to address local concerns and needs in juvenile crime prevention."

According to a report released this week by Children First for Oregon, Jackson County ranked third among Oregon counties with an arrest rate of 95.9 per 1,000 youths in 1996-97, well above its five-year average of 79.2. The county plan

aims to reduce it to 74 per 1,000. Josephine County's 1996-97 arrest rate was 68.7 per 1,000, up from the five-year average of 56.9. The 1996-97 statewide rate was 58.4 per 1,000, up from 56.8.

Alan Young, director of the Jackson County Juvenile Department, has said the keys to reducing juvenile crime are to assess the risk of young offenders and intervene with those offenders at the highest risk of repeating crimes. A similar strategy is proposed by Terry Soeteber, juvenile department director in Josephine County.

"Thirty million dollars won't fix all the problems," said Gina Firman, a Tillamook County commissioner who headed the governor's advisory committee that reviewed the 36 county plans. "But it is a good start."

Some legislators want to spend more money on early childhood programs, specifically an extension to all counties of the Healthy Start program of home visitations to children under age 2.

"I believe it is a difference among people who have a common goal," said the Democratic chief executive. "But I do not believe it is insurmountable. It's a matter of how you balance resources between high-risk youths and early childhood — and I believe you have to do both."

Earlier, Senate President Brady Adams said his own budget proposal accommodates the amount of the governor's request.

"I'd like to see a section for early childhood intervention," the Grants Pass Republican said. "But I am not going to argue with him over whether we need to direct resources to juvenile justice. We are willing to work with him."

Kitzhaber's budget also requests \$20 million more to expand drug and alcohol treatment for youths and adults.

After voters approved a 1994 ballot measure that requires prison time for violent offenders, and some juvenile offenders to be tried as adults, Kitzhaber has presided over a massive expansion of state prisons and regional juvenile detention centers.

"We were left with a public safety system that was quite effective in meting out punishment but did little for keeping people from being involved in the system on the front end," Kitzhaber said.

"I believe a public safety system has an important balance between punishment and prevention. So I committed myself to try to redress the balance between swift and certain punishment for breaking the law, and an equally serious effort to keep people from breaking it in the first place."