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Mensaje Politico Political Message

Measure 11: How can we become more informed?

In November of 1994, Oregon voters passed Ballot Measure 11. Prior to Measure 11, judges used discretion in sentencing based on the circumstances of each individual case. Measure 11 eliminated the use of court recommendations and requires mandatory minimum sentencing for 16 specified felonies. These felonies include murder, manslaughter, assault, kidnapping, rape, sodomy, unlawful sexual penetration, sexual abuse and robbery. Measure 11 states that youth aged 15, 16 or 17 at the time charges are filed shall automatically be tried as an adult. Juvenile cases, prior to the passage of this legislation, were waived to adult court only when recommended by the courts. Measure 11 requires people sentenced for these crimes serve the full sentence, which cannot be reduced for any reason. There is no chance of early release.

How does this affect us?

All around Oregon, communities have experienced the aftermath of Measure 11 on young people. As of May 2000, Measure 11 youth offenses include Robbery 1, Robbery 2 and Assault 2 representing a staggering 57% of total Measure 11 youth cases. The youth offenders are largely male (93%), and Hispanic youth make up 14% (African American youth 12%, Asian youth 4% and Native American youth 3%). More than half of Measure 11 youth come from Marion, Multnomah and Washington counties.

Because of the mandatory sentencing after age 15, many of those affected by Measure 11 are first-time offenders serving a minimum of five-plus years in the state penitentiary. While other juveniles convicted in adult court are given a "second look" by judges after serving 50% of their sentence, youth convicted of a Measure 11 offense are not. Measure 11 also prohibits expungement, or removal, of a Measure 11 offense from a juvenile's record, regardless if it is a first offense.

What can we do?

Since the passage of Measure 11, parents, youth, churches, schools, and law enforcement have worked together to educate their communities about what exactly mandatory minimum sentencing means for first time youth offenders. Many agencies are working hard to make sure that young people have information about violence prevention and of the implications of Measure 11 crimes.

This November, voters will determine a very important outcome for the state of Oregon. If passed, Ballot Measure 94 will repeal the mandatory minimum sentences established by Ballot Measure 11. Measure 94 requires that all willing persons sentenced under Measure 11 be re-sentenced. Measure 94 will also require that a person 15, 16 or 17 years old and who was tried as an adult for committing one of these crimes will now be subject to the jurisdiction of juvenile court for re-sentencing unless waived to adult court.

As caring community members, we should become familiar with all sides of this issue. For more information, or to find out how you can get involved, call Children First for Oregon at (503) 294-1456. You can also visit their website at www.childrenfirstfororegon.org. I also invite you to call my office at 248-5239 or visit my web site at www.co.multnomah.or.us/cc/ds2 to find out how you can become more involved in your community.

Measure 11 information furnished by Children First for Oregon, a statewide non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization for children and families.