
OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION TESTIMONY ON THE PAROLE BOARD PROCESS

Before the House Judiciary Committee / May 28, 2013

By: Marion County Sheriff Jason Myers / OSSA President



Chair Barker and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Jason Myers, I am the Marion County Sheriff and president of the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association. I'm here today testifying on behalf of the 36 elected Sheriffs in Oregon.

I would like to begin by thanking the House Judiciary Committee for holding this hearing on an issue that is very important to the safety of our communities around the state.

Today you will hear testimony on a decision made by the Oregon Parole Board to release a convicted murderer (Sydney Porter) that is based on very limited information on the facts surrounding the brutal death of John Day Police Officer Frank Ward. While this situation involves a Police Officer who was serving his community as a peace keeper, the fact of the matter is this situation could occur to any victim of a crime if nothing is done to change the process our Parole Board follows.

To me, the Parole Board is viewed as the "gate keepers" for determining whether or not eligible offenders can be released from prison. As "gate keepers" the Parole Board should be carefully reviewing all of the information pertaining to each offender and then making the best decision in the interest of justice and community safety.

Through this recent decision by the Parole Board and subsequent conversations I have had with Director Jay Scroggins, I have learned that the entire Parole Board review is driven by process and not by due diligence, pertinent factual information and determination of the offender's risk to reoffend. To put this simply, the Parole Board only hears information from a limited number of sources (the victim/victim family, prosecutor, offender, etc.) in each Case it hears. If any of these sources choose not to attend or were not properly notified of the hearing then the information that would normally be provided by the source is not included in the hearing. Can you imagine making a decision (with community safety in the balance) without all the information? That is exactly what happened in this situation.

In closing, the Oregon Sheriffs would like you to know that the process the Oregon Parole Board follows and the decision that was made in this case is very concerning to us. While we understand the Parole Board's need to carefully review each situation and to give offender's a second chance that must be balanced by justice, accountability, and the offenders risk to reoffend. The only way this information can be vetted by the Parole Board is through a thoughtful, factual and inclusive process.

Thank you.

Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

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