

Submitter: Gregory Hickey  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary  
Measure: SB579

I have worked in Minimum, Medium and Maximum security prisons for both adults and Juveniles, in positions including guard, teacher, counselor, disciplinary review officer and manager. I also worked as a Parole and Probation Officer for two decades. I personally witnessed many injustices in our legal system- including the law enforcement/ judicial and correctional systems. The USA incarcerates more people per capita than the next half dozen largest incarcerators in the world combined, but we are far from the safest country. Reformation is long overdue and has never been a priority to politicians, who typically run for office on Law and Order platforms. In prisons, I personally started the first library, first drug counseling and first financial awareness programs in a large new prison. I met resistance at every level. I also participated on Oregon's original Sentencing Guidelines committee. The system needs to be changed from the inside out. Inmates have never had adequate input into our system which dehumanizes and destroys individuals. Having the right to vote should be a right for everyone. Instead, our nation has sought to disenfranchise segments of the population. Humans who have little or no positive influence in society, who are continually beaten down, act in accordance to the manner they are treated. Citizens who vote demonstrate an interest in society are better citizens. The vast majority of inmates are returned to society following incarceration. Whether we want to think of inmates as citizens or not, they are. Oregon has the opportunity to treat all citizens as citizens and rectify injustices by granting a freedom that should be a human right. SB 579 should be advanced.