

Submitter: William Gray

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR203

I am writing in support of this measure, which would amend the OR constitution to ban law enforcement officers from wearing face masks, and require them to wear identifying numbers. I feel that masking encourages an attitude of impunity, where officers feel they can get away with abuses of power and violations of laws and civil rights. We have all seen too many movies and read too many stories of secret police and vigilante groups (think: Ku Klux Klan) who wear masks to avoid accountability. Even if certain officers actually adhere to high standards of behavior, I personally will be far less trustful towards masked officers, and I am quite sure there are many others who feel the same way. Therefore, masking erodes public trust in law enforcement, and for it to be effective, it must have some measure of public buy-in.

I do understand that there is some risk of citizens using officers' identities to harass them, including looking up their addresses online and harassing their families. However, I feel this is a minor risk, especially compared to the major benefit to society of prohibiting masking. And although federal ICE agents have clearly lost the public trust and it will take a LOT of time and work to regain that trust, they can start the process by disavowing all the outrageous policies and behaviors that have made them so highly unpopular. Over time, if they and all law enforcement officers exhibit impeccable behavior, they will regain public trust, and as that happens, I expect harassment of officers to decline. De-escalation has to start somewhere, and I feel the most logical starting place is with a prohibition on officer masking.

Finally, it is very important to me that my state, Oregon, as well as other states, demonstrate very clearly that they WILL NOT be bullied into submission by the dictatorial regime dominating the federal government in these very dark times. That they stand up for the rule of law at all times. Refusing to allow federal (or any) law enforcement officers to be masked is one way of standing up to the bullying and fascist tactics.