
Josephine (JO) County (CO) Justice System (JS) & Public Safety Services (PSS)

JO CO Justice System & Public Safety Services The 2012 expiration of federal funding for services resulted in two JO CO proposed levies as a solution. They both failed.

Oregonian June 6, 2013³ It's one of the first things we learn in civics class: Governments are instituted to secure the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They are formed, by means of a social contract between governor and the governed, to guard against a state of nature in which life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." In southern Oregon, this contract between an insolvent government and a destitute tax base needs mediation.

These timber-dependent counties are caught in a time warp not entirely of their own making. While Curry and Josephine counties currently boast the lowest property taxes in the state, they also harbor a dwindling revenue base. They and others have subsisted off of the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) and Community Self-Determination Act in the years since Oregon's timber industry was all but shut down. In the wake of SRS's expiration, southern Oregon is a powerful demonstration of how addictive federal subsidies can be: Budget shortfalls sprouted as soon as the payments dried up.

Salem's plan is another hit: *House Bill 3453* would pick up half the tab for a minimum level of public services, an effective bailout of these local governments. The catch is that money from a higher, distant source -- federal or state -- is never free. It is paid by other taxpayers, as well as the same people receiving it. What's more, there are always strings attached. **Salem seizes the right to raise local income taxes without a vote of the locals.** So, residents in these counties would learn what people in Detroit already know: Home rule is not a God-given constitutional right, but a privilege extended by the plenary power of the state. In this sense, rural local governments are becoming an endangered species -- starved by their own citizens, poached by outsiders.

Oregon House Bill (HB) 3453

Oregonian June 18, 2013⁴ The county timber payments, which come from the Secure Rural Schools program, were started by Congress in 2000 to provide money for counties struggling from the loss of federal timber receipts after logging was severely curtailed on federal lands. The program expired last year, exacerbating budget problems in several rural Oregon counties. Two of them, Josephine (JO) and Curry, have slashed their public safety services to the point that Gov. John Kitzhaber and state legislators are working on a bill to provide emergency state aid while also imposing local taxes.

Salem seizes the right to raise local income taxes without a vote of the locals.

Oregonian June 29, 2013⁵ HB 3453 would authorize the governor in consultation with legislative leaders to declare a public safety

fiscal emergency and, with approval of officials in affected counties, impose a local tax to help pay for necessary services. Earlier this month, Kitzhaber said he has few options other than calling out the National Guard if an emergency develops in one of the distressed counties. The governor could assign state police to help in those counties, but that likely would require the Legislature to approve increased funding.

Oregonian July 3, 2013⁶ HB 3453 would prohibit use of a local income tax in counties where it is prohibited by local charter. That's a nod to JO CO, where such a tax is banned by the county charter.

Political Risk Of Raising Taxes Without Voter Approval

Oregonian July 8, 2013⁷ Under HB 3453, Gov. John Kitzhaber could enter into agreements with local county commissioners to raise money for additional law enforcement services. Half of the money would come from state coffers and the other half would be in the form of higher local taxes. JO CO, which has a charter provision prohibiting a local income tax, would have to look at other tax sources if it wanted state aid. Rep. Wally Hicks, R-Grants Pass, helped rewrite the bill to allow counties to raise revenue through other means, including a tax on telecommunications services.

Oregonian July 8, 2013⁸ The legislation would allow the governor to work with legislative leaders and affected county leaders to declare a public safety fiscal emergency. Once that's done, the state would provide law enforcement assistance; the county could then tax residents to pay its share of costs.

Oregonian July 10, 2013⁹ Curry County Board of Commissioners Chairman David Smith said he hopes the southwestern Oregon county won't have to seek emergency aid from the state through HB 3453. "I believe in our citizens and I believe they understand that because of the loss of federal forest receipts we have to help ourselves," Smith said. While the state would match money raised by the county under the legislation, **it also carries a political risk for commissioners who would be in the position of imposing taxes without voter OK.**

Want more information? Contact a member of the *Exploratory Committee*.

1. Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (HNA&HS). July 9, 2013. *Justice System Exploratory Committee*. Hugo, OR.

2. Hugo Neighborhood Association. July 9, 2013. *All Voters & Votes Are Legitimate*. Hugo, OR.

3. Monaghan, Brendan, Guest Columnist. June 6, 2013. *Brendan Monaghan: Federal Timber Policy Sows Discomfort in Southern Oregon*. "Oregonian." Portland, OR

4. Meps, Jess. June 18, 2013. *Wyden Pushes Oregon Wilderness, County Timber Payment Bills Through Senate Committee*. "Oregonian." Port., OR

5. Oregonian Editorial Board. June 29, 2013. *Lawmakers Expect To Sine Die: Oregon Legislatures Today*. "Oregonian." Portland, OR

6. Mapes, Jeff. July 3, 2013. *Bill Aiding Distressed Oregon Counties Unanimously Passes State Senate*. "Oregonian." Portland, OR

7. Mapes, Jeff. July 8, 2013. *County Rescue Bill Approved by Oregon Legislature*. "Oregonian." Portland, OR

8. Har Janie. July 8, 2013. *Lawmakers Expect To Sine Die: Oregon Legislatures Today*. "Oregonian." Portland, OR

9. Mapes, Jeff. July 10, 2013. *Curry County Looks To Property Taxpayers To End Immediate Financial Woes*. "Oregonian." Portland, OR

Exploratory Committee's Mission

Mission An independent Justice System and Public Safety Services Exploratory Committee (*Exploratory Committee*) to investigate the JO CO Justice System & Public Safety Services (JS&PSS) issue was formed under the leadership of the Hugo Neighborhood Association and Historical Society (HNA&HS).

Big picture ideas for the exploratory effort include the following.

1. Identifying the JS&PSS issue.
2. Identifying the JS&PSS sub-issues for research and analysis.
3. Identifying a range in level of services
4. Identifying a range of costs for services.
5. Identifying revenues for services.

The ultimate goal is an adequate justice system and public safety services. Is it possible to have a higher level of service for a lower cost? The purpose of the *Exploratory Committee* is to gather information adequate enough to understand the JS&PSS issues. This includes educational outreach efforts.

The *Exploratory Committee's* purpose is limited to investigating and researching the JS&PSS issues. It will not make evaluations of right or wrong, nor make recommendations on how to vote.

The contents of this brochure are expressions of the opinions and beliefs of those that contribute based on their thoughts and experiences. Hopefully, their efforts will assist the public toward informed decision-making.

- Donations Are Not Tax Deductible -

Edited by Mike Walker, Member, Exploratory Committee

HNA&HS Officers

Wayne McKy, Chair
Lis Butowitsch, Treasurer
Mike Walker, Education Chair



Exploratory Committee Members

Mike Walker, Chair
3388B Merlin Road # 195
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526
541-471-8271
Email: hugo@jeffnet.org

Wayne McKy, Member
Karen Rose, Web Master
Jon Whalen, Member

Justice System Exploratory Committee

<http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/justicesystemexploratorycommittee.htm>

HNA&HS

<http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/>

C:\Documents and Settings\mike\My Documents\AAA
Applications\Hugo_Neighborhood_Association\Community_Issues\JO CO Public Safety Services
2013\Brochures\7 BROCHURE_III_2 Political Risk 071613.wpd

Political Risk Of New Taxes Without A Vote Of The Locals

Brochure III.2
Justice System & Public Safety Services Series

*Salem seizes the right to raise local
income taxes without a vote of the
locals.*

*While the state would match money
raised by the county under the
legislation, it also carries a political
risk for commissioners who would be
in the position of imposing taxes
without voter OK.*

Very Draft July 13, 2013

Hugo Justice System Exploratory Committee