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

### JO CO Justice System & Public Safety Services<sup>1-4</sup>

The 2012 expiration of federal funding for services resulted in two JO CO proposed levies as a solution. We believe an informed public will consider the question behind the 2013 Measure 17 - 49, the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Three Year Local Option Tax: “Is JO CO providing a minimally adequate level of public safety services?”

### Types of Criminal Offenses: Felonies, Misdemeanors and Infractions About.com Crime/Punishment<sup>5</sup>

In the U.S. there are three basic classifications of criminal offenses - felonies, misdemeanors and infractions. They are distinguished from each other by the seriousness of the offense and the amount of punishment for which someone convicted of the crime can receive.

- **Felonies**
- **Misdemeanors**
- **Infractions**

Criminal offenses are further classified as property crimes or personal crimes. Elected officials on the federal, state and local level pass laws that establish which behavior constitutes a crime and what the punishment will be for someone who is found guilty of those crimes.

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1. Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (HNA&HS). July 9, 2013. *Justice System Exploratory Committee*. Hugo, OR.  
2. HNA&HS. July 24, 2013. *Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission*. Hugo, OR.  
3. HNA&HS. July 9, 2013. *All Voters & Votes Are Legitimate*. Hugo, OR.  
4. HNA&HS. July 24, 2013. *Government Needs Support*. Hugo, OR.

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## What Is A Serious Crime?

**What is a felony?** Felonies are the most serious classification of crimes, punishable by incarceration of more than a year in prison and in some cases life in prison without parole and even execution. Both property crimes and person crimes can be felonies. Murder, rape and kidnapping are felony crimes, but armed robbery and grand theft also can be felonies.

Not only can the person who committed the crime be charged with a felony, but so can anyone who aided or abetted the felon before or during the crime and anyone who became accessories of the crime after it was committed, such as those who help the felon avoid capture.

Most states have different classifications of felonies with increasing penalties for the most serious crimes. Anyone convicted of a felony loses civil rights, including the right to bear arms and even the right to vote, in some states.

**What is a misdemeanor?** Misdemeanors are crimes that do not rise to the severity of a felony. They are lesser crimes for which the maximum sentence is 12 months or less in jail. The distinction between misdemeanors and felonies lies within the seriousness of the crime. Aggravated assault (beating someone with a baseball bat, for example) is a felony, while simple battery (slapping someone in the face) is a misdemeanor.

But some crimes that are usually treated as misdemeanors in the courts, can rise to the level of a felony under certain circumstances. For example, in some states, possession of less than an ounce of marijuana is a misdemeanor, but possession of more than an ounce is considered possession with intent to distribute, a felony.

Likewise, an arrest for driving under the influence is usually a misdemeanor, but if anyone was hurt or killed or if it is not the driver's first DUI offense, the charge can become a felony.

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## Types Of Criminal Offenses: Felonies, Misdemeanors, & Infractions

**What is an infraction?** Infractions are crimes for which jail time is usually not a possible sentence. Sometimes known as petty crimes, infractions are usually punishable by fines, which can be paid without even going to court.

Most infractions are local laws or ordinances passed to deter dangerous or nuisance behavior, such as setting speed limits in school zones, no parking zones, traffic laws or anti-noise ordinances. Infractions can also include operating a business with the proper license or improperly disposing of garbage or trash.

But under some circumstances, an infraction can rise to the level of a more serious crime. Running a stop sign might be a minor infraction, but not stopping for the sign and causing damage or injury is a more serious offense.

**What is a serious crime?** The working assumption is that a serious crime is a felony.

**What is the crime picture for Josephine County?**  
This educational brochure will be expanded by others.

- Josephine County, Oregon Crime
- City of Grants Pass, Oregon Crime
- Crime Per 1,000 Population: Grants Pass & Rural JO CO
- Others?

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

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5. Montaldo, Charles. Downloaded July 13, 2013. *Types of Criminal Offenses: Felonies, Misdemeanors and Infractions*. About.com Guide. [http://crime.about.com/od/Crime\\_101/a/Types-Of-Criminal-Offenses.htm](http://crime.about.com/od/Crime_101/a/Types-Of-Criminal-Offenses.htm).

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## 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

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### HNA&HS Officers

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### *Justice System Exploratory Committee*

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

### HNA&HS

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

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# TYPES OF CRIMINAL OFFENSES: FELONIES, MISDEMEANORS AND INFRACTIONS

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Justice System & Public Safety Services Series

**Very Very Draft July 13, 2013**

*Hugo Justice System Exploratory Committee*