

Protecting Oregon, Protecting You

Attorney General John R. Kroger's 2009 Legislative Agenda

As your Attorney General, my highest priority is to protect our state and its citizens from crime, pollution, fraud, and discrimination. Oregon has great laws on the books, but these laws are not always enforced. During the 2009 legislative session, I will seek support for five important civil and criminal enforcement initiatives to ensure that people and companies that violate the law are held accountable.

FIGHTING INTERNET SEX PREDATORS

The Department's Internet Crimes against Children program has been incredibly effective, leading to 65 convictions of child predators and child pornography offenders in less than two years. The resources for that program have been cut. We are asking the legislature to restore the funds needed to keep our children safe.

PROSECUTING MAJOR DRUG TRAFFICKERS

The Department of Justice's organized crime section investigates and prosecutes large-scale methamphetamine and drug trafficking organizations in our state. Recently, the Department teamed with the Benton County District Attorney's office in the Icebreaker case, which dismantled a major meth trafficking ring. We seek the funding needed to adequately investigate and prosecute major meth and narcotics trafficking organizations.

HOLDING POLLUTERS ACCOUNTABLE

The Oregon legislature made polluting a crime in the 1990s, but these laws are rarely enforced because there are no full time environmental crimes prosecutors in the state – none. We propose creating a small environmental crimes unit to work with DEQ and EPA to prosecute polluters. This unit will change polluter behavior and save the state money, because aggressive criminal enforcement will lead to a reduction in the costs of DEQ's administrative compliance program.

DEFENDING CIVIL RIGHTS

Nothing is more important than the protection of our civil rights and civil liberties. Oregon law gives the Attorney General the power to file civil rights law suits, but unfortunately, we have no civil rights enforcement unit to do so. We propose the creation of a small civil rights enforcement unit to protect Oregonians from discrimination based on race, age, gender or sexual orientation, to stand up for reproductive rights, protect persons with disabilities, preserve civil liberties, and defend the employment rights of Oregon's veterans.

COMBATTING FRAUD

In tough economic times, we need greater ability to protect Oregonians from fraud. Right now, our state cannot adequately protect consumers from financial fraud and abuse because debt collectors and powerful financial institutions like banks and mortgage companies are exempted from enforcement under Oregon's fraud statute, the Unfair Trade Practices Act. I have sent to the legislature a bill extending this important statute to debt collectors. We are also reviewing proposals to combat fraud in the financial services sector.

PROTECTING YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN

Finally, I will work to protect funding for two existing Department of Justice programs that are critical to our state. First, we need to protect the Defense of Criminal Convictions Program to keep convicted criminal offenders behind bars. If funding is cut, we will lose our ability to defend criminal convictions in Oregon's courts. Second, our Child Support program is essential to child welfare in the state. For every \$1 we invest in the program, we put over \$5.80 into the pockets of a poor single parent to help raise their children. This program is even more important to kids in our state during the current recession.

These important initiatives will protect every Oregonian and will cost the state less than \$2 million per year -- less than 1% of the Department of Justice's \$422 million biennial budget. This agenda is smart, tough, and cost-effective and it aims to do more for Oregon with very few resources. I hope we can win your support.

~ John R. Kroger