



## POLK COUNTY PRESS RELEASE

---

### **Polk County Public Safety Leadership Joins to Express Deep Dismay with Governor's Juvenile Clemency Order**

**DALLAS, OR** - As elected Commissioners and public safety leaders in Polk County, we are expressing our deep disappointment and dismay with Governor Brown's decision to use her clemency authority to unilaterally change the prison sentences of 75 individuals throughout Oregon. As has been reported, these are individuals serving adult sentences for violent crimes committed when they were between the ages of 15 to 17 years old.

Four of the 75 were convicted in Polk County. Among the crimes committed by these four are murder, forcible rape, and sexual abuse against children as young as 10. Clearly, these sentences have been reserved for the rarest of cases and imposed against the most extremely violent offenders.

We are also appalled at the breathtaking lack of regard for the rights of crime victims evident in the process surrounding the Governor's decision. No victims or their families were consulted or even warned that blanket commutations were going to be issued by the Governor. Instead, District Attorneys and many victims found out from the media. The Governor's Office's ensuing attempts at back peddling and blaming others for their missteps has been unconvincing at best. To not recognize and take responsibility for the trauma this decision created for crime victims throughout Oregon is simply unacceptable.

Polk County has long supported the value of redemptive juvenile justice. Generations of County Commissioners, District Attorneys, Sheriffs, and Juvenile Department Officers have advocated through budgets, programs, and individual decisions for juvenile offenders to receive a second chance. This includes juveniles that have committed property offenses, drug offenses, and even person crimes. Alternative programs such as probation, diversion, sanction courts, and treatment opportunities have been the hallmark of Polk County's commitment to reformative juvenile justice.

It has always been understood, however, in the most extremely violent cases, adult length sentences are appropriate for accountability and community safety. The cases on the list from Polk County are there because the facts of the case and the individual

circumstances were carefully weighed before going forward. The Governor's order does none of that. Rather, it abandons the practices of past Oregon governors in applying the extraordinary power of executive clemency in rarest of cases and applies it in a broad brush manner that Oregonians should find very unsettling. We urge the Governor to reconsider her decision.

Craig Pope, Chair, Polk County Board of Commissioners

Lyle Mordhorst, Polk County Commissioner

Jeremy Gordon, Polk County Commissioner

Mark Garton, Polk County Sheriff

Aaron Felton, Polk County District Attorney