Law enforcement coalition announces plan to fight for federal stimulus grants

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. -â€“ Attorney General John Kroger, sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and crime victimsâ€™ advocates today announced a broad coalition effort to fight for federal stimulus money to protect public safety budgets during Oregonâ€™s dire budget shortfall.

â€œThese funds will be used to put more cops on the street, more patrols on the road in rural communities and more prosecutors in Oregonâ€™s courtrooms,â€• Kroger said. â€œProtecting public safety is a huge challenge in the best of times, but today, that challenge is even greater.â€•

Local law enforcement in Oregon is suffering as a result of budget cuts.

â€œOur patrol deputies numbered sixteen in 1989 and today we have five,â€• said Curry County Sheriff John Bishop. â€œFederal grant money may mean the difference between having a Sheriffâ€™s Office and not having one.â€•

The federal stimulus bill passed by Congress and signed by President Obama includes nearly $4 billion for law enforcement. Although much of the money is distributed by a formula based on population, a substantial amount of money will be awarded through a competitive grant process.

Todayâ€™s announcement is the beginning of a law enforcement partnership that will focus on winning as many competitive grants for Oregon law enforcement as possible. If successful, these grants will help maintain current programs â€“ allowing sheriffs, police chiefs and district attorneys to keep officers on the street and prosecutors in Oregon courtrooms.

In recent years, law enforcement in Oregon has been hurt by the decline in federal timber revenues and now the deepening recession. Some counties simply cannot afford any more cuts to their basic public safety budgets.

Kroger said that cooperation was key to obtaining the maximum amount of grant money to protect crime victims, put police officers on the street and battle Internet child predators.

â€œThis will be a team effort. In the past, smaller counties and rural communities lacked the resources and grant-writing experience needed to obtain grants. So today, larger law enforcement agencies, like my own Department of Justice, will be helping smaller communities get their fair share of the pie.â€•

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