

Washington County Judge  
Thomas Kohl

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What is your background with crime and law enforcement in the Hillsboro area?  
Judge Thomas Kohl background in Crime and law enforcement, Judge Thomas Kohl first became a judge 8 years ago in 1997 and Judge Thomas Kohl was appointed by Governor Kitzhaber. At that point TK had been a civil lawyer for his entire career and was not exposed to crime in the criminal system so that is when he became a Judge. Then 99 percent of the cases he handled were criminal cases so that was his first involvement here in the Washington county court system and the criminal justice system. He did not realize so much crime going on in Washington County because as a regular citizen back then you read about it once in awhile in the newspaper but one did not see the enormous numbers he would see everyday at his job the number of people that are involved in crime especially (since seeing methamphetamine video in Drug Court) the number of people that are involved with methamphetamine use. The statistics over at the jail are now probably eighty percent of the people who are picked up for doing crimes in Washington County are using methamphetamines or some other drugs and most of those people are using methamphetamines.

How has Hillsboro changed since the 1980s?

In Hillsboro in the 1980s the population was maybe in the mid 30s and of course it is now close to eighty thousand people. The total population of Washington County was maybe right around 225 to 250 thousand and now in 2005 it is 485 thousand to 500 thousand people. With that almost doubling of the population here in Washington County the number of crimes of committed have increased dramatically over the last 25 years or so. Not only because of the drugs that we have here in Washington County but also the sheer numbers of people when you get that type of population explosion.

What effect has it had on law enforcement?

The effect it has had on law enforcement that is that is has put a great burden on the law enforcement to. They just do not have enough people to go out and cover and investigate all the crimes that are committed here in Washington County. The majority of their time, law enforcement officials, is generally spent on investigating crimes involving violence, robbery, kidnapping, those types of things. The typical crime where maybe someone breaks into someone's car along the side of street where as 25 years ago it might have been on the priority list of the Beaverton police department or the Hillsboro police department today they don't have time to look into those types of crimes anymore because of the enormous numbers especially now you have of identity theft and forgery and unauthorized use of a motor vehicle. People who are stealing cars so they can support their drug habit or people who are stealing identities so they can go out and buy things unlawfully through the use credit cards or forging checks and then using the items they had purchased to sell for drugs. It has been a tremendous increase in the law enforcement area in the number of crimes committed.

How has the drug court changed over time?

Drug Court had just been started on March seventh of this year so they have been doing it same now as they were doing it then. Eventually the format may change a little bit. Drug Court in the United States was started back in 1989. The first drug court was down in Miami, Florida and the second Drug Court in the whole United States was in Multnomah County with Judge Carl Hoss. The Drug Courts are specialty type of courts that deal with people that have substantial criminal histories that do not involve violent crimes. They do not take people into their drug court who have committed robbery or assault or any type of weapons charges. They take in people who are non-violent offenders for example identity theft, forgers, people who have stolen a car those are the types of people they take into their Drugs Courts. Drug Court a specialty court that combines intensive outpatient treatment with weekly contacts with the local drug court judge. It has proven very successful over the long run with 75 percent of the people that start drug court finished it. The recidivism rate for people after three years that have successfully completed drug court is around 15 percent as compared to 50 percent who go through the traditional court end up committing new crimes again. The numbers are really strong as far as the effectiveness of the drug courts. Not only that drug courts help reunite families that have been separated because of the use of drugs, they also the person who is using that drug breaks that addiction that cycle addiction that they have been involved in. It promotes community safety the drug court it self. It also is financially beneficial to the community because for every dollar spent in drug court that will save 10 dollars down the road for typically somebody who would continue to use drugs and continue to be a part of the system. Economically it makes sense to spend money in drug court.

What have the trends of the gangs in Hillsboro in the last 25 years?

Well TK thinks that the gang population has increased in the last 25 years. Well as far as TK's role as a judge and his encountering them and his seeing gang members coming in for sentencing for serious offenses every once in awhile. He thought that one would get a better answer from someone who has in the gang enforcement division in Washington County than what one would get from him

What changes have you seen women's role in Law enforcement and Courts in Hillsboro?

They have 4 female judges here in Washington County. When he became a judge 8 years ago there was only two. They are seeing more and more female judge being appointed and more females being appointed as judges in the state of Oregon. They are seeing a lot of female officers many more than when he was first started practicing here in Oregon back in 1982. The numbers have increased dramatically for female police officers and female judges.

How do you perceive the relations between law enforcement and Hispanics and minorities?

Obviously with the growing Hispanic community that we have here in Washington county has created a special situation for the local police enforcement. They now have a lot of Hispanic officers on the police force. They have officers maybe not be Hispanic but speak both languages. There has been an increase in the number of officers who are

Hispanic and those who speak Spanish. It has been a good thing to see in Washington County

Do you have any comments on domestic violence, high tech crime, or juvenile crime? He does not have any comments on juvenile crimes. He is not in the juvenile department so he does not have anything to base his opinion on. Domestic violence they have a specialty court here in Washington county for domestic violence run by Judge Nancy Campbell and that's a court specifically deals with first time offenders who are charge with a domestic violence crime. That as he understands has been a very successful court that has people that complete that domestic violence program end up changing their lives. As very as the domestic crime it self on an everyday basis here in Washington County they have a lot of trials over the course of the year. A lot of those trials are domestic violence trials where somebody has punched somebody that is a husband wife relationship or some other special type of relationship. He thinks he has a seen an increase in those in the last 10 years especially in the number of trials

What is the impact of measure 11 and is it reducing crime and is there adequate jail space?

Well there is the impact of measure 11 is that it took away from sentencing discretion of a lot of judges. He does not think that there are too many judges in Oregon that fully support measure 11 because the fact that it has taken away some of the discretion of that the judges had previously. Measure 11 offenders that are doing time that under the old system may not have done as much time as they would have done with the new system. The problem with measure 11 offenders is that when they are prison they don't have any programs that are made available to them for rehabilitation and there are two primary reasons for sending someone to prison. First of all is for punishment. The punishment aspect of it to put someone in jail for a certain number of years and the second reason is to rehabilitate them. Under measure 11 they don't get the rehabilitation aspect of that two pronged solution. So that is the problem with measure 11. They do not have enough jail bed space for people who are charged with crimes locally or for people who are charged with crimes that can end up putting them in prison. That is the reason why the state is considering building a new jail in Madras that may house 2000 to 2500 inmates. So there is limited jail bed space for those people in the state prison system and local crimes.