

QuickPoint! – A Boring Budget Item Highlights Public Safety Dysfunction

By Eric Fruits, Ph.D.

It's budget season for local governments in Oregon. Budgets may sound boring. In reality, they are the best demonstration of what politicians truly prioritize. Forget the campaign promises and the press releases. The budget is where the action is.

This year, there is a line item tucked into the City of Portland budget for Prosper Portland to provide money to small businesses that were damaged by vandalism or theft.

Your gut instinct may be to say, "That's great! Finally, Portland is doing something to help."

But think about it. This boring budget line item highlights local government dysfunction.

Businesses pay taxes to support the police and the district attorney, who seem to do little to prevent and punish crime. Criminals know this and target those same businesses for vandalism and theft, causing tens of millions of dollars in damage. Then, the city uses even more taxpayer dollars to pay for the damage that could have been avoided if the city actually did something to prevent the crime in the first place.

Once the bad guys get wind that the city will cover the losses, they may be encouraged to do even more damage and looting.

Our elected leaders need to get back to the basics by cracking down on crime and enforcing property rights. Arrest the bad guys, prosecute them, and send them to jail. These are not victimless crimes. With this new budget item, all of us become victims.

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