



Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon

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April 20, 2016

TO: Multnomah Charter Review Committee

FR: Rev. Joseph Santo-Lyons, Director  
Asian Pacific Islander Network of Oregon

RE: Comments Supporting Amending the Multnomah Charter to  
Change the Office of Sheriff to an Appointed Position

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The Asian Pacific Islander Network of Oregon (APANO) is Oregon's leading non-profit advocacy organization advocating for policies that impact the 250,000 Asian and Pacific Islanders statewide. We believe long-term, social change requires a deep examination of how our public and private institutions operate. Achieving social justice requires structures and systems that ensure the rights, resources and recognition our communities need to thrive.

We strongly urge the Charter Review Committee to allow the voters of Multnomah County to consider revising the County Charter to make the Office of Sheriff appointed rather than elected.

Unfortunately, Multnomah County is experiencing the third Sheriff in a row to operate in a way that reflects poorly on the County and on the Office of Sheriff. Given, that the last two Sheriffs resigned in disgrace and that the current Sheriff is the subject of an AG investigation and has received a vote of no-confidence from the Oregon Sheriffs Association, it would seem the time is now to make a change. That change should be for a more transparent and accountable Office of Sheriff—appointed by the County Chair and the Multnomah Board of County Commissioners. The system we have now is clearly broken and cannot be trusted to hold itself accountable.

Our criminal justice system has a disproportionate and devastating impact on communities of color and therefore must be held to the highest standards of accountability. The office of Sheriff is one of the least accountable and we need to provide voters with an opportunity to reconsider how Multnomah County chooses its sheriff. Benefits to having an appointed rather than elected Sheriff include the ability to do a state or even nationwide search for the best candidate and immediate avenues for intervention when problems arise.

Currently, the only process for holding a Sheriff accountable is to wait up to four years for a re-election or to try and launch a re-call effort. The first method may take too long and the second is too inaccessible and cost prohibitive. Turning over accountability for the Office of Sheriff to the Board of County Commissioners means



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there is a 5-member body appointing the Sheriff and available to step in when serious issues arise.

As has been well documented in the media and through the Use of Force Report, we face immediate and urgent challenges with the current Sheriff. It is time to elevate this conversation to Multnomah County voters.

We urge the Charter Review Committee to act. Bring greater transparency and accountability to the Office of Sheriff in Multnomah County. We urge you to forward a recommendation for amending the County Charter to appoint the Office of Sheriff.

