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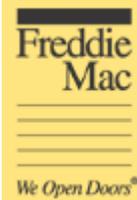
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LOCAL NEWS

Hagan to Vote "Yes" on Issue 1

by Staff Reports
Cleveland City News
Originally posted 9/18/2002

As the governor's race closes up and heats up the difference between the two candidates, Tim Hagan and Bob Taft, is being brought into sharp relief. And nowhere are those differences greater than over the contentious Issue 1, the bill that would mandate treatment for first and second-time drug offenders. Gov. Taft has come out strongly against Issue 1, and Hagan has now thrown his support behind the initiative.

Hagan's camp recently released the following statement:
"After much thought, consideration and consultation, I have decided I will vote yes on Issue 1 this November 5th. Although I don't think it is the best policy to amend the Ohio Constitution, it is a worse policy to ignore responsible efforts to provide treatment instead of incarceration for non-violent first and second-time drug offenders throughout Ohio.

"Let me be clear - drug dealers, violent criminals and repeat offenders who refuse to clean up their act absolutely belong in jail or in prison and as governor I will make sure that is where they end up.

"In a perfect world the issue of rehabilitation versus incarceration would have been addressed in the state legislature, but the Republican-controlled General Assembly cowardly refuses to act. Early in this legislative session my brother, Senator Bob Hagan, introduced legislation that would require the state to provide drug treatment, but his bill has never even received a hearing.

"The 50 drug courts already operating in Ohio are showing great signs of success at rehabilitation and correction and are saving taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars. We need to build on that success and ensure qualified offenders in every quadrant of our state have access to treatment.

"This is also a matter of dollars and cents. Treatment costs about \$3,500 a year while incarceration costs \$22,000 a year. According to Policy Matters Ohio, between 1985 and 2000 Ohio increased spending on corrections by more than \$1 billion - that's an increase of 211%. Over time, a responsible policy of rehabilitation over incarceration promises to reduce crime and save Ohio taxpayers millions of dollars.

"Finally, there is a common misconception that drug addiction affects only people in our urban communities. That is far from the truth. I was struck this week by the story of Florida Governor Jeb Bush's daughter Noelle who is struggling to overcome her addiction to drugs. She is currently undergoing court-ordered drug treatment. Her father, the governor, was quoted as saying: 'The road to recovery is a rocky one for a lot of people who have this kind of problem.'

"We all know someone who has struggled with addiction. These are individuals who, if given the help they need, can once again become productive citizens. We owe it to them and we owe it to ourselves to give them that opportunity."

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