





# newsreview.info

The News-Review *online*

## Finding a policy that works

**PAUL CRAIG**, [pcraig@newsreview.info](mailto:pcraig@newsreview.info)  
February 3, 2006

 [Comments \(0\)](#)  [Print](#)  [Email](#)  
 [Subscribe](#)

Jim Lemery said his company, Don Whitaker Logging & Hauling Inc., has drug tested employees for 19 years.

Lemery voiced frustrations about how, even with that policy, employees who have been fired for using drugs on the job have still received unemployment benefits from the state.

Fortunately, Lemery had a captive audience at a roundtable discussion Thursday, which included three local legislators.

State Sens. Floyd Prozanski and Jeff Kruse and State Rep. Susan Morgan listened to local employers, both large and small, talk about the effect of drugs on their workplace.

The gathering was hosted by the Douglas County Employer Network, a work group of Douglas County Communities Aligned to Prevent Substance Abuse.

Lemery, the company's safety director, said it's difficult for a business with a drug-free policy.

"The problem is, you don't get very many applicants," he said.

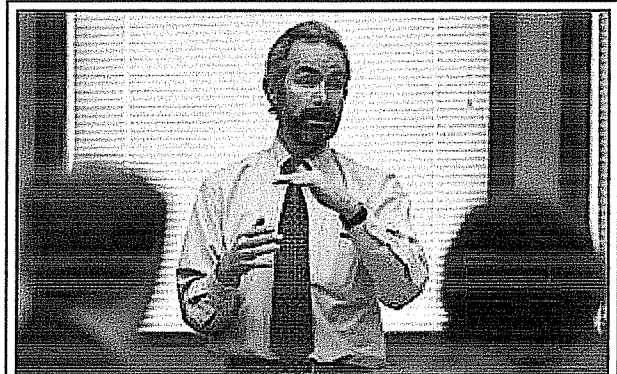
People call him, say they need work and express interest in applying. Lemery tells them to be there in the morning, take a drug test and fill out an application.

They rarely show, he said.

"It seems to be that thing, take the drug test in the morning," he said.

Colleen Puryear, branch manager for Cardinal Employment Services in Roseburg, said she experiences the same issues. If 10 to 15 people come in to test for a position, she said, "we're lucky if we get one-third of them to pass."

"We don't have enough employers who want to do a drug test, because they're afraid they'll lose their work force," she said.



[Click to Enlarge](#)  
[Order a photo](#)

Prozanski: Oregon State Sen. Floyd Prozanski talks to the crowd during the 'Building a Drug-Free Workforce' roundtable discussion Thursday at the Douglas County Library.

MICHELLE ALAIMO / N-R staff photo

### ADVERTISEMENT

## VERY ELEGANT



home with amazing views of the city. Featuring all solid core doors, tile, hardwood & marble floors.  
#7015123  
\$479,000



[Click here to view more homes!](#)

[CLICK AD TO SEE MORE](#)

Kruse said that's unfair to employers. Right now, he said, there is no policy on drug testing and state unemployment benefits. He also admitted it would be difficult to get such legislation passed.

Though, he said, "having the discussion is incredibly warranted."

"It's time the state quit enabling people and help them deal with their reality," he said.

Mimi Bushman, with Workdrugfree, a program of the Oregon Nurses Foundation, said states such as Idaho, Washington and Ohio have started programs to reward businesses that implement drug-free workplace policies.

Joe Popsical, risk manager at Seven Feathers Hotel & Casino Resort, said, right now, there is more risk than reward in having such a policy.

Seven Feathers has had a "very active" drug policy for years, he said. It has also had various problems because of how laws are written and interpreted.

One law, he said, states that an employee is entitled to unemployment benefits, unless it would have a "significant impact" on the employer.

A number of administrative law judges, Popsical said, look at a casino as a big moneymaker. Thus, the employee's claim wouldn't have a significant effect.

Those employees, Popsical contends, are handling customers' money and credit cards, posing not only a significant financial risk to a business, but also to the people who pass through.

"It doesn't seem to be enough to have a policy you've clearly communicated to your employees," he said.

Morgan said a clear line needs to be found in the wordings and definitions -- such as what is "significant" -- of regulations.

"If it requires a statutory change, we need to find an avenue to make that happen," she said.

Morgan told the employers at the discussion to make their contributions and dialogue an ongoing process. She told everyone not to discount the power of their voices.

"To see things change and to have your voice heard, you need to be involved in the legislative process," she said.

\* You can reach reporter Paul Craig at 957-4211 or by e-mail at [pcraig@newsreview.info](mailto:pcraig@newsreview.info).

---

**BACK** 