

It is a rare circumstance when a judge writes a letter to the editor concerning a statewide issue. It is even rarer when five judges do this as is the case here. Five Wood County judges – Common Pleas Judges Kelsey, Mayberry and Reger along with Bowling Green Municipal Court Judge Mark Reddin and Perrysburg Municipal Court Judge Molly Mack – want to ensure each and every citizen in Wood County makes an informed decision when voting this fall.

All five of us are urging voters to vote NO on ISSUE 1, a state constitutional amendment that will destroy years of progress on the opioid epidemic and will make Ohio a magnet for drug dealers from all of the nation. Our arguments against this issue are numerous but here are the top five reasons to vote no:

1. **This is a Constitutional amendment that cannot be changed.** In the last 25 years the drug epidemic has changed significantly and taken many different forms. In the 1990's we were dealing with crack cocaine, then it was K2 and synthetic drugs, and then methamphetamine, and then heroin, and, now fentanyl. We have no idea what the emergent drug will be in a year, 5 years, or even 10 years from now. Policy changes, given the specificity of Issue 1, would take years and substantial resources to adjust and could not be completed in time to address the nuance of the changing dangerous drug situation.
2. **The opioid epidemic and dangerous drugs addiction are both a health care and criminal justice issue.** Issue 1 tries to pigeonhole drug addiction as an exclusively health care matter. But in doing so the proponents ignore the necessary aspect of compelling treatment for those unwilling or unmotivated to engage in treatment. Incarceration, which Issue 1 effectively eliminates, is a necessary component of moving people who are drug dependent into treatment.
3. **Issue 1 would effectively eliminate drug courts, intervention in lieu of conviction, and other programs meant to assist drug addicted individuals.** Every day we see people who want to live a sober life, free from addiction stop and every day we see those people fail and in some cases die. One thing that keeps these people alive is the court's ability to incarcerate them to dry out and find a new treatment plan. Issue 1 eliminates common pleas courts from dealing with drug addicts and eliminates any court's ability to incarcerate people who are using drugs that could kill them. Many people who find themselves in a system that is seeking to help them would find themselves with neither help nor assistance.
4. **The proposed savings that Issue 1 would bring are illusory at best.** Issue 1 proposes to save money through a lower prison population that would then be moved to health care providers for treatment purposes. When this same proposal was passed in California with the same promises of savings there were 134,000 inmates in the California prison system. Two years later there are 133,400 inmates in the California prison system with no real savings. There has been no analysis of this proposal by the State of Ohio Office of Budget and Management with any projections of whether there will or will not be savings. From everything we can see there will be no savings and people currently receiving assistance will have none to go to.
5. **There are real dangers to our community in passing Issue 1.** Issue 1 would allow for the 25% reduction of sentences of a large number of felony offenses – other than drug charges – without any kind of local say or review by a judge. Issue 1 would allow the possession of dangerous drugs with the potential to kill thousands to carry only misdemeanor penalties. Because of these almost non-existent penalties Ohio will become a magnet for drug trafficking that will endanger our communities.

As judges we see the ravages of drug addiction every day. We know the realities of the opioid epidemic and we are daily trying to address it in a nuanced manner. We are making some inroads. If Issue 1 passes all of our efforts to effectively protect the community while rehabilitating and helping the drug addicted offender will be lost with no reasonable way to effectively address this crisis or the next drug crisis that will hit us in the future. Issue 1 is bad for Ohio, bad for Wood County, and bad for all of our communities.

Please vote NO on Issue 1.

Sincerely,

Judge Reeve Kelsey

Judge Alan Mayberry

Judge Matthew Reger

Judge Mark Reddin

Judge Molly Mack