



**To:** **Members of the House Rules Committee**

**From:** Kevin Campbell,  
Oregon Circuit Court Judges Association

**Date:** April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**Re:** **Support for HB 2597**  
Restores the mission of the Public Official Compensation Commission and disconnects  
Judicial and Legislative compensation.

HB 2597 seeks to accomplish two primary objectives. The measure restores the work and mission of the Public Official Compensation Commission (POCC) and disconnects Judicial and Legislative compensation.

**Public Official Compensation Commission Restoration:**

In 2007, the Legislature restored and restructured the Oregon Public Compensation Commission (POCC) based on a recommendation from the Public Commission on the Oregon Legislature. The 11 member commission was charged with recommending salary levels for statewide elected leaders, members of the Legislative Assembly and Judges to the Governor based on a number of criteria including:

- Comparable positions in neighboring states
- The qualifications and skills necessary for each office
- The level of responsibility implicit in each office
- The cost of living
- The total compensation of the positions, including benefits other than salary
- Budget limitations
- Any other factors the Commission may consider to be reasonable, appropriate and in the public interest

Since the report issued in 2008 and as the result of changes made to the authorization statutes in 2009, the POCC is no longer operational and the reappointment of new members to the

commission is occurring sporadically. Restoring the original mission of the Public Official Compensation Commission through the passage of HB 2597 is important because the measure:

- insures that recommended compensation levels for public officials are developed by an independent commission that is free from self-serving interests or conflicts of interest.
- insures that recommendations for public official compensation are provided to the Governor for inclusion in the Governor's recommended budget.
- insures that the Commission continues its goal of attracting and retaining highly qualified public officials in order to provide the best state leadership and governance while maintaining Oregon's historical commitment to both a citizen legislature and officials committed to public service.

**Judicial and Legislative Compensation Disconnect:**

Unlike compensation levels for public employees where regularly negotiated contracts address salary and benefit issues over time, the Oregon Legislative Assembly is the sole entity charged with setting and adjusting the salaries of Oregon's judges. In 2009, legislation was adopted that reconnected judicial and legislative compensation decisions. HB 2597 would separate these compensation decisions again.

**A Current Evaluation of Judicial Compensation in Oregon:**

According to the National Center for State Courts Survey of Judicial Salaries released on July 1<sup>st</sup> of 2012, Oregon ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation for Circuit Court Judges salaries when adjusted for cost-of-living. The survey uses Cost of Living indices from the Council for Community and Economic Research, the most widely accepted U.S. source for this information, with nearly 400 reporting jurisdictions from across America.

We urge your support for HB 2597!