



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON**

April 9, 2013

To: House Judiciary Committee  
Representative Jeff Barker, Chair

Re: HB 3463 relating to compensation of public defenders – Comments

Representative Barker and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League has a position on Oregon State Courts that states, “The State of Oregon should provide access to its courts that meets the diverse needs of all people who use the state courts.”

The Public Defense Services Commission maintains a system that ensures the provision of public defense services in the most cost-efficient manner ... and negotiates contracts to provide legal services to persons financially eligible. The agency has requested to fund increases for salary-paid defense attorneys and increases in the hourly rate for defense attorneys and investigators in the next biennial budget.

This bill asks for compensation at a rate equivalent to an assistant or deputy district attorney of comparable experience practicing within the same county. The League sees that this request is not within the Governor’s proposed budget. However, the provision of defense counsel is an access to justice issue in the court system, and should be included in the public safety budget. If the payment rate for defense attorneys is too low, there will not be sufficient members of the bar willing to accept this work and spend time on these cases.

The League believes that the provision of defense services is important in the quest for justice and suggests that the increases in salaries and hourly rates be seriously considered in the budget process.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Robin Wisdom in cursive.

Robin Wisdom  
President LWVOR

Handwritten signature of Karen Nibler in cursive.

Karen Nibler  
Social Policy Coordinator