

Chief Justice Thomas A. Balmer



Oregon Supreme Court

February 14, 2014

The Honorable Fred Girod, Co-Chair
The Honorable Tina Kotek, Co-Chair
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction


Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Kotek:

I am writing in support of Jefferson County's request for state bond funding to help finance a replacement courthouse in Madras.

The need for upgraded courthouses facilities across Oregon has been documented for a long time. I deeply appreciate the support the Legislative Assembly gave this issue in 2013, by funding specific courthouse replacement and improvement projects, as well as authorizing use of State bonds to help counties provide safe and adequate courthouse facilities for the public and public officials who do business there.

The 2013 Legislature established a project review and approval process to support county applications for state bond funding. The Judicial Department has been working with the Department of Administrative Services to implement that process. Although my office has not finished reviewing Jefferson County's application, it appears the application has presented the information necessary for me to make the findings required by statute to pursue state bond funding to support this project. It is my intention in the future to approve project applications only if they are submitted through the Judicial Department biennial budget-building process, so that I can provide a systematic and prioritized courthouse improvement plan to the Legislature.

However, I am willing to support Jefferson County's request for this session's consideration since Jefferson County has been actively working to address the courthouse needs of its citizens for a decade and its work was almost completed when the 2013 planning process was enacted. The fact that the county finished its process before the state's review process is fully in place should not deter the Legislature from supporting this needed project, and I urge your favorable consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Balmer
Chief Justice