

I am writing in support of SJR 4: Eliminating Age-Based Mandatory Retirement of Judges.

A decline in someone's strengths and abilities is not necessarily linked to their chronological age. Some people are "old" before their late fifties. While others are "young" octogenarians. None of us can accurately predict what our own physical or mental health will be in coming years. Nor can any of us predict with certainty the coming physical or mental health of another. It is not the age of our bodies that determines what we can do. Rather it is our abilities.

Mandatory retirement of Oregon Judges at the end of the calendar in which they achieve age 75 is a bad idea. If it ever did serve a useful purpose that time has long since gone. People live much longer with many in finer health in their later years now than they did when the contested provisions were written into the State Constitution. Our older Judges' continued service brings long lifetimes of experiences, knowledge, and achievements to bear on some of our society's most pressing problems.

To arbitrarily cut ourselves off from the continuing contributions of some of our most accomplished and capable citizens is self-destructive. In an age when more and more of us are having to learn how to get by with less and less why should we purposefully force less upon ourselves? Why should we deny ourselves the continuing contributions of some of our finest contributors?

Let the citizens decide through fair and open elections who will judge them and their issues. The citizens can decide when someone's time is past if it truly becomes a factor. We should let sitting Judges decide when their interest or abilities have faded to the point where retirement is the right choice. We ask Judges to make difficult decisions for us. We should let them each make their own decision of if and when to retire.

Most respectfully,
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