

**Statement in Support of HB 2337**  
**On behalf of the Oregon State Bar's Judicial Administration Committee**

February 25, 2015

The Oregon State Bar's Judicial Administration Committee supports HB 2337, which proposes adding one new judgeship to the Marion, Multnomah, and Washington County Circuit Courts.

The proper administration of justice is directly dependent on having a sufficient number of judges to manage the caseload presented. Significant consequences can result if there are not enough judges to reasonably perform the work before the court, including reduced quality of outcomes, risks to public safety, significant delay, increased costs to litigants and court resources, public dissatisfaction with the judicial system, and reduced job satisfaction of court officers and staff. A healthy economy is also dependent on businesses and private parties having a means to resolve commercial disputes in a timely and efficient manner.

Washington County Presiding Judge Bailey has provided an example of the consequences inadequate judicial resources, explaining that because of limited resources, civil litigants can face significant delay in getting to trial because there are not enough judges to handle all of the pending trials. This has led to litigants trying to avoid filing civil cases in Washington County and, in some cases, settling their cases for less than their actual value simply to avoid delay in getting to trial.

In recent years, courts throughout Oregon have taken numerous steps handle more cases with fewer staff, including using specialty and treatment courts designed to streamline certain types of cases and meet the needs of certain unique populations. Oregon courts are also in the process to converting to electronic filing and records management, which increases efficiency for litigants and case management by the court. But despite these efforts, three of our largest counties are in serious need of additional judicial resources to meet growing demand.

In addition to handling the regular docket of all the other judicial districts in Oregon, the Marion County Circuit Court has specialized jurisdiction to handle certain state government and state agency disputes and disputes concerning Oregon corporations, among other things. It is essential that there are enough judges to meaningfully handle this work. Multnomah County Circuit Court is the busiest court in the State, with continual growth projected over the foreseeable future. And even with this bill, Washington County will *still* have the highest ratio of population to number of judges. Washington County is predicted to grow faster than any other county in the state over the next several years. Several major Washington County employers, including Nike, have also announced significant expansions in the coming years. The need for an additional judgeship in this court cannot be overstated.

For these reasons, the Oregon State Bar Judicial Administration Committee strongly encourages that HB 2337 be passed so that the Marion, Multnomah, and Washington County Circuit Courts can continue to do the critical work needed in their communities in a manner that promotes public safety, economic health and growth, and public respect for the judiciary and state government.