



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON**

March 5, 2015

Joint Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee  
Representative Jennifer Williamson, Chair  
Senator Chip Shields, Co-Chair  
[WaysandMeans.PublicSafetySub@state.or.us](mailto:WaysandMeans.PublicSafetySub@state.or.us)

Re: SB 5514 - Oregon Judicial Department - Support

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The LWVOR has a position on Oregon State Courts that affirms the separation of powers and the treatment of the Oregon Judicial Department, the third branch of our state government, as a separate, independent, co-equal branch of state government.

In order to maintain a strong court system within the state, the League supports the budget requests for additional judges and staff for circuit courts. Oregon citizens depend upon the courts to resolve family dissolutions, treat mental health and addiction clients, divide estates, sanction offenders, and settle business disputes. Many times individuals and families are in crisis when they appear before a court, and they need calm, compassionate court assistants and judges.

The League supports the continued development of family courts and treatment courts to resolve societal problems. The courts make referrals to social service agencies, treatment programs, and hospitals and follow up on the compliance or success of these services in criminal or treatment courts. Courts can change the directions of citizen lives given the resources, including permanent staff, to operate these specialty courts.

The maintenance and replacement of county courthouses has not been well managed by local governments. County courthouses are the most notable and visual representation of the court system for the general public. The League commends OJD and the legislature for setting up a schedule for construction projects and for the e-court conversion. The state bonding authority is needed for these projects.

The courts are a critical piece of our public safety system as offenders are sent to jails, treatment programs, specialized housing, hospitals, or correctional facilities. The court decisions impact the populations of these facilities and utilization of other resources. The budget and staff salaries should reflect the importance of this pivotal role. Thank you for the opportunity to support our third branch of government.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Wisdom".

Robin Wisdom  
LWVOR President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Nibler".

Karen Nibler  
Social Policy Coordinator