

3/23/2015

TO: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety  
Sen. Shields, Rep. Williamson Co-Chairs

FROM: AARP Oregon

RE: Support for Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor proposal

AARP Oregon supports the Oregon Department of Justice's proposal to create an Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor position. The request is just a small part of the Oregon Department of Justice's budget.

The Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor will work together with prosecutors, law enforcement and community partners to improve the prosecution of these often extremely difficult and often complex cases. The Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor will have three primary responsibilities: Training, technical assistance and outreach.

Funding the proposal to create an Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor is important and necessary. Every year an estimated 2.1 million older Americans are victims of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation. In Oregon nearly 30,000 reports of potential abuse were made in 2013. However, experts believe that for every case of elder abuse or neglect reported, as many as five cases go unreported.

Oregon has specific laws that criminalize the abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults, as well as general laws that criminalize acts constituting elder abuse (e.g. murder, sexual assault, battery, theft, and fraud).

Unfortunately, the dynamics of elder abuse create multiple challenges for prosecutors. Most cases involve the victimization of older adults by perpetrators with whom they have an ongoing and trusting relationship. Because they so often trust and depend on the perpetrator, victims may be slow to recognize and report abuse and reluctant to cooperate with criminal justice professionals.

We urge you to support funding the proposal to create an Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor. Thank you for your attention to this very important issue.