

CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON

FOR THE 2nd JUDICIAL DISTRICT
LANE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
125 E. 8TH AVENUE
EUGENE, OREGON 97401-2926



KARSTEN H. RASMUSSEN
PRESIDING JUDGE

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The Honorable Fred Girod, Co-Chair
The Honorable Tobias Read, Co-Chair
Capital Construction Subcommittee
Joint Ways & Means Committee

By e-mail only

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Read:

I write today in support of Lane County's request to restore the Lane County Courthouse project to the list of courthouse capital projects legislatively approved for the March 2017 bond sale. The Lane County courthouse replacement project was prioritized by the Association of Oregon Counties in 2015 and included in the Chief Justice request for funding in the 2015 session.

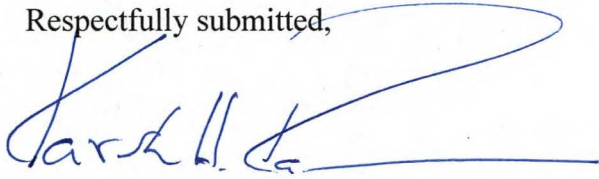
The Lane County Courthouse requires replacement due to a number of safety, health, and functionality concerns. Lane County has invested significantly in studies of the building since 1991. The commissioned studies have documented many safety, health, and functionality issues in detail. For brevity, I'm including just a few of the major points here. One study showed that the building is vulnerable to major structural damage and even collapse in the event of a seismic event. Another survey outlined hundreds of thousands of square feet in the building which contain asbestos materials, some of which is now remediated. Yet another study determined that the current structure's space cannot reasonably be retrofitted to resolve the security, ADA, and technology infrastructure issues. In addition to the County's studies, the 2008 legislatively funded courthouse assessment ranked the current building among the worst in the state for accessibility for people with disabilities.

While these studies provide technical details about the building, the reality of working here is that judges and court staff deal with functional, health, safety, security, and ADA problems on a daily basis. Among the most significant issues is the daily security risk posed by inmates. Inmates, judges, and staff use the same elevator and are confined to the same corridors for movement throughout the building. In one area, inmates and the public use the same hallway. The courtrooms are, without exception, too small to retrofit for ADA accommodation, forcing judges and staff to provide ad hoc accommodation where feasible. Finally, our building is structurally unsound. The building's exterior is made up of glass bricks. An earthquake of any magnitude will cause the glass bricks to fail resulting in the building not having exterior walls, making it uninhabitable.

The current Lane County Courthouse is inadequate for the health and safety of judges, staff, and the public and inadequate for the future space needs of the court. Despite being 50 years old, the building does not meet any standards for designation as a significant historical structure. Lane County has been proactive in studying the building over the last 25 years and recently commissioned an impartial report from the National Center for State Courts regarding the future space needs of the court for the next 50 years. This report will provide valuable insight and perspective about the needs for the next Lane County Courthouse.

On behalf of the Lane County Circuit Court judges, I fully support the efforts of Lane County in replacing the current courthouse and respectfully request that the Lane County courthouse replacement project be restored to the list of courthouse capital projects for bond funding in March 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Karsten H. Rasmussen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karsten H. Rasmussen
Presiding Judge