



CIRCUIT COURT OF OREGON

FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
CLACKAMAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE
OREGON CITY, OREGON 97045

ROBERT D. HERNDON
PRESIDING CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

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Clackamas County Presiding Judge Supports Continuing the Courthouse Replacement Program

I am writing to the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety as the Presiding Judge of Clackamas County to ask for your support for the funds needed to plan and construct a new courthouse. The long term health of justice in this county depends on the construction of a facility which is sized adequately for current and future demand for services and is structurally safe.

The Clackamas County Courthouse was originally constructed in 1936 to house one courtroom, it has been modified over the years to add ten additional courtrooms. The 1936 design makes ADA improvements expensive and less than desirable in function. Though there have been upgrades to most systems over the past 80 years, the building remains inadequate to the demands of court operations.

Our current Courthouse in downtown Oregon City is landlocked and suffering from safety challenges. There is no jury assembly space within the building, and no separation of circulation within the building among the public, prisoners, Judges, and court staff. Parking near the courthouse is extremely limited, and staff, court proceedings attendees, and jurors must pay for parking and walk several blocks to the courthouse.

A critical factor driving construction of a new courthouse is that the structure of the Clackamas County Courthouse was found to be seismically unsound in two studies. A seismic evaluation found that the building would experience significant damage during a 'design level' earthquake (500 year event) and pose a risk to the life safety of the occupants. A subsequent geotechnical and seismic hazard evaluation indicates that the site is susceptible to liquefaction under 'design levels' of ground shaking with the potential for several inches of settlement and spreading.



In addition, access to justice in Clackamas County is currently on life support. We have been identified as the first or second county in need of additional judges for at least 15 years and we have been approved for several additional judges but have no space to accommodate them. The need for these additional judges can be demonstrated with just a couple of important facts:

1. Right now a young mother who needs pre-trial help with support for herself and her children must wait 116 days for a hearing. In 2012, the wait was 63 days which was unacceptable at that time.
2. Complex civil litigation is the order of business. These are cases which typically last 4 to 6 weeks. We are continually scheduling those cases years out. Most of the cases are large condo projects where often hundreds of owners find themselves unable to sell their property until the case is resolved
3. We set over thousands of criminal cases for trial Victim's rights and public safety are a concern.

For over 20 years Clackamas County has been planning, building, and consolidating relevant services to the County owned Red Soils Campus in Oregon City to provide a cohesive integrated public service center for citizens. A new Courthouse facility has been the center of that master plan since its inception. I urge the Committee to support Clackamas County's current funding request for \$1.25 million for planning to spur our momentum toward a newly constructed courthouse by 2023.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Herndon
Presiding Judge