



**Conserving the Peace Through Values Driven Service
Sheriff Pat Garrett**

February 8, 2017

Chair Jeff Barker and Representatives
Oregon House Judiciary Committee
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony on HB 2605

Dear Chair Barker and Representatives,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input regarding the Washington County Circuit Court's request for two additional Judges, along with required staffing.

As the second largest county in the state, we believe that our County Judicial system is impeded by the number of judges available to accommodate an extremely full court docket. We have supported several court developed programs with efforts to lessen the burden to include, Early Case Resolution, DUII and Reckless Driving Diversion, Drug Court, Domestic Violence Deferred Sentencing and Mental Health Court. Albeit these programs are creative and effective means for conserving scarce judicial resources, the latest census indicates Washington County population growth realized the second highest increase in the state. Projections continue to lean toward that annual trend of over 11,000 new residents making our county home.

By adding additional Judges and staff, I believe there will be a reduction in court delays and case backlog. Due to the crowded criminal docket, it is extremely difficult to get a civil case to trial in a reasonable amount of time. Every local lawyer knows the frustration of preparing for trial, lining up witnesses and evidence, and learning on the day of trial that no judge is available. Unfortunately, these disappointments have become the norm as judges struggle in vain to keep up with our rapidly expanding population and seemingly endless criminal matters. These delays in criminal and civil cases increase the costs to the parties, delay justice, and significantly diminish community confidence in our judicial system.

An increase in court capacity also helps us better manage our already overcrowded jail, by providing additional judicial resources for suppression hearings, change of plea hearings, release hearings, and judicial settlement conferences. A large percentage of our limited jail beds are taken by inmates awaiting trial. Any enhancements to reduce court caseloads and

timeliness of court proceedings will allow us to manage our bed space more efficiently and reduce the possibility of forced releases of inmates who should be in our custody.

On the investigative front, adding two positions will increase judicial access for our detectives who need search warrant approval. Criminal investigations are more complex than ever with the rapid advancements in technology and more assistance is necessary from the courts to seize crucial items of evidence.

I hope you agree to approve the addition of two Washington County Circuit Court Judges, which will greatly enhance the entire justice system to effectively meet the needs of our rapid growing county.

I thank the Committee for your consideration of this very important matter and your service to our community.

Sincerely,

Pat Garrett
Washington County Sheriff