



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 19, 2019

To: Joint Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee
Senator Jackie Winters, Co-Chair
Representative Carla Piluso, Co-Chair

Re: **SB 5532** – Public Defense Services Commission – **Support**

The League believes that the State of Oregon should provide access to its courts that meets the diverse needs of all people who use state courts. The League also believes in funding of mandated programs or procedures for the state courts. The appointment of Public Defense Attorneys for indigent persons in criminal or juvenile court cases is a required court procedure and should be adequately funded.

Public Defense Attorneys serve a critical role in the justice system. In past biennia the payment rates for court appointed defense attorneys has been studied and found to be below acceptable levels in comparison to district attorneys. The caseload has been higher and leads to less time spent on each case. Reports indicate a need to increase salaries for defense attorneys or compensation levels for casework.

The proposed budget for this biennium includes expansion in juvenile dependency and termination cases in five new counties and an increase in contract rates for indigent criminal defense. Our membership encourages this investment in juvenile dependency and indigent defense in our court districts.

Please honor the role of defense attorneys in the carrying out of justice by increasing payments in the coming biennia.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norman Turrill". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Norman Turrill
LWVOR President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Nibler". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Karen Nibler
LWVOR Social Policy Coordinator