



# CIRCUIT COURT OF OREGON

FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
CLACKAMAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
OREGON CITY, OR 97045

**KATHIE F. STEELE**  
PRESIDING CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

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Honorable Co-Chairs,

For the record, I am Kathie Steele, Presiding Judge of the Clackamas County Circuit Court.

The Clackamas County courthouse remains unsafe from both catastrophic fire and from an earthquake. Our ADA accessibility barely meets the legal minimum. The number of people in the Records Room must be limited because there isn't enough oxygen.

Two years ago, you all saw me carrying a yardstick around the Capitol. At that time, the courthouse was literally three feet from a hundred-foot drop into the Willamette River. I should start carrying a ruler as the erosion has continued. Our situation has not improved and in fact has worsened.

The Courthouse simply cannot be safely or affordably refurbished to meet the court needs of Clackamas County, not currently and certainly not in the future. The current courthouse needs to be replaced. Now.

In addition to the physical risk, justice is being delayed for thousands of people. Clackamas County's courthouse was built in 1936 when our population was around 50,000 people. Today, we're at 423,000 and growing.

In 1936, there was a single courtroom along with county office space. Today, all of the county functions have been vacated and the courthouse retrofitted to accommodate 11 sub-optimal courtrooms. We have a current need for 14 judges hearing cases but simply no further room for expansion.

We have a real problem here. Cases are delayed and hearings are regularly postponed.

- Parents are waiting months for child support hearings.
- Civil litigation trials are scheduled 1-2 years out.



- We have the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest criminal docket in Oregon for both felonies and misdemeanors resulting in continuances beyond our recommended disposition dates.

Finally, our tiny confines have significant security and safety challenges for victims, witnesses, jurors, prisoners and defendants. I know our County is committed to replacing the courthouse and I hope you are too.

Thank you,

*Kathie J. Steele*  
*Presiding Judge*