

R. Paul Frasier

District Attorney for Coos County

Office of the District Attorney

Coos County Courthouse

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February 27, 2023

Chair Grayber and Members of the House Committee on Emergency Management,
General Government and Veterans

Re: HB 2054

Greetings and Felicitations:

I support the addition of elected District Attorneys and our deputies to be included in POLICE/FIRE PERS. I support this for various reasons:

1. While there has been a lot of publicity about the lack of public defenders, hardly anyone recognizes that District Attorney Offices, especially in rural counties, are having the same issue when it comes to filling prosecutor positions. In Coos County, I am budgeted for seven deputies (and in reality that is not enough). I have three vacant positions. The problem I am having is that we cannot attract qualified applicants. One of my positions has been open nearly a year. Another has been empty going on eight months. The last position has been vacant for three months. We have increased salaries. We have offered up to \$5,000 as an incentive for qualified applicants to apply and move to Coos County. Yet we still cannot get qualified applicants. I believe that by placing my deputies and I into POLICE/FIRE PERS we can offer another incentive for qualified applicants to apply for our vacant positions;

2. Another problem we face is that there are some deputies who we hire, who after a few years, leave the profession and go elsewhere. The ability for offices such as mine to retain qualified and good prosecutors diminishes over time. Offering POLICE/FIRE PERS to such persons will help insure that great professional prosecutors stay in the profession versus leaving for greener pastures elsewhere; and

3. It is only fair that we be included in POLICE/FIRE PERS. My deputies and I prosecute the most serious criminal cases, from homicides, child sex abuse, domestic violence, to fraud and burglaries. I personally have been threatened or stalked by persons I have prosecuted. I have received at least two voice mails where I was told I deserved to be shot or seriously harmed. In 2014 a serious death

threat was made against me resulting in myself having to wear a bullet resistant vest for almost a year. Within the last couple of months I was confronted by an angry family member of person who had just been convicted of manslaughter. He recorded me as I walked through the aisles of Wal-Mart loudly calling me every name in the book. He then turned around and posted it on Facebook. I am not the only one that faces these kinds of threats. I rarely go anywhere without a sidearm. My deputies and I respond to homicides in the middle of the night, during the workday, and on weekends and work side by side with other law enforcement to build cases from the ground up. We also receive calls day and night from the police asking us questions, most often about search and seizure and probable cause issues. In Coos County it is our practice to review every police generated search warrant affidavit before they are presented to the court to make sure that there is sufficient probable cause and legal justification for the requested search. We are one of only two public safety strike prohibited public safety employees not in POLICE/FIRE PERS (see ORS 243.736 and ORS 238.005(19)).

Finally, being a prosecutor is a difficult job and is not an eight to five type of employment. These are difficult jobs requiring exceptional personal sacrifice to make sure justice is done in each case.

The biggest fear I have right now is that my current staff, given our inability to attract qualified applicants, will at some point "burn out". I fear my remaining deputies will leave the profession altogether in favor of less stressful private sector jobs with better benefits. Being in POLICE/FIRE PERS will help retain experienced prosecutors.

In my opinion, it's long overdue for career prosecutor benefits to reflect career prosecutor workloads by adding them to the Police and Fire PERS designation.

Sincerely:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Paul Frasier". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "R" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

R. Paul Frasier