

PETE SANDROCK
Portland

May 8, 2023

Representative Jason Kropf, Chair
Representative Tom Anderson, Vice-Chair
Representative Kim Wallan, Vice-Chair
House Judiciary Committee
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for SB 807 A– blanket disqualifications of judges in criminal & juvenile cases

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Anderson and Wallan, and Committee members:

I served five terms as Benton County District Attorney including a term as president of the Oregon District Attorneys Association.

I support SB 807A while also acknowledging the professional obligation of DAs and public defenders to occasionally remove a judge from selected cases. Indeed, **in exceptional circumstances they should be able to employ a blanket disqualification**, effectively removing a judge from all criminal and juvenile cases in the county.

The problem is that the current law gives DAs and public defenders **unilateral and unreviewable power to blanket disqualify** a judge and to do so **without explanation or justification**. The practice can **wreak havoc on judicial administration**, especially in rural districts with few judges.

I support SB 807A because it is a reasonable check on unilateral power. It allows a judge to request an independent review if the judge has been disqualified so many times as to have been effectively removed from the criminal docket. It **aligns Oregon with the laws in most other states.**

In my 22 years as DA, we did not blanket disqualify a judge. If we had, I would have been entirely comfortable with the review procedures described in this bill.

Respectfully,

Pete Sandrock
Benton County District Attorney (1977-1999)
President, Oregon District Attorneys Association (1988)