



City of Ontario

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January 28, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Public Safety
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Letter of Support for Malheur County Courthouse Planning Funds

To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

As Mayor of the City of Ontario, Oregon, I am pleased to represent the City Council in expressing full support in securing funds for the plans and design for a new courthouse for Malheur County.

The current courthouse, which resides in Vale, is the home of the 9th Judicial District, and is an important asset for this area in serving the needs of this large community. Malheur County is approximately 10,000 square miles in size, and serves a population of around 40,000 people. These large numbers place the courthouse, and staff, at a serious disadvantage resulting in overcrowding, insufficient security, delays, the possibility of jurors sitting beside defendants, and private conversations being held in hallways. And that is just a few of the issues facing the court.

There is serious understaffing and insufficient space. Only one courtroom has the capability to hold jury trials, which severely hinders the ability of the court to process cases quickly and efficiently. The District needs three judges, but with only 1½ courtrooms, that is not an option due to the current lack of space.

The construction of a new courthouse in Vale is an absolute necessity. It is an investment for the entire county, and would enable the court to provide equal access to justice, while enhancing safety, timeliness, and dignity for all who are served.

The Ontario City Council wholeheartedly supports securing a new courthouse for Malheur County. We believe this project will bring significant benefits to all of Malheur County.

Very sincerely,

Deborah K. Folden, Mayor
City of Ontario, Oregon