



DOLE COALWELL

A T T O R N E Y S

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Jeff Mornarich • Jason Montgomery • Jim Forrester • Cadence Whiteley
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February 24, 2025

The Senate Judiciary Committee
Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Member of the Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 95

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee,

I have practiced law since 2011, almost exclusively in Douglas County. Six of those years were as a public defender, and the remaining years have been as a civil attorney wherein I strive to meet the many and various legal needs of our communities. I am also board president for the Umpqua Valley Public Defender. Case after case, I am reminded of our immediate need for another judge.

Dole Coalwell represented 2020 Archie Creek fire victims in complex litigation. The demand of this litigation on an understaffed bench was significant. Though our county may be relatively small, our legal needs are not small.

SB 95 would increase the appeal of practicing dependency and criminal law in Douglas County. Currently, hearings and trials are commonly postponed the day before because judges are unavailable. This does not attract the attorneys I look to recruit. I have heard lamentation of the Douglas County way from multiple out-of-county attorneys. It is disheartening for attorneys, who after weeks prepping and securing witnesses, must do it all over again. Parties and witnesses are so often at their wits end by the trial date; they often cannot maintain an even keel pending the new trial dates. Greater harm to the parties, their loved ones, and diminished faith in the justice system is the price. While most unfortunate for the parties involved, it is also discouraging to the dedicated attorneys and judges who are devoted to our justice system.

Multi-day trials, even those involving children or domestic violence, must be calendared piecemeal over the course of weeks, sometimes months in our county. One day here, another there. This harms families who need the stability and resolve of a judge's decision on important issues such as custody, parenting plans, etc. The bench does its best and utmost to triage the matters that affect the most vulnerable. But this too comes at a cost to litigants relying on the court to address other important issues confronting our local businesses, non-profits, landlords and tenants, heirs/beneficiaries, etc. Their cases often take years. The effect is cumulative and detrimental for the vibrancy of our county and our citizens' faith and reliance on the courts. I strongly urge your support of SB 95.

Very Truly Yours,

s/Cadence L. Whiteley