

The Oregon State Bar Supports Healthy Courts

The Oregon State Bar supports fully funding the Oregon Judicial Department to ensure Oregonians have access to critical court services.

Fully funding Oregon's courts will allow the courts to meet service goals that have been unattainable for most of the last decade:

- Fill 80 staff positions that have been held vacant due to budget reductions,
- Create 14 new judicial positions in order to meet timeline standards for children in foster care, and
- Create 78 new staff positions to allow the courts to improve public access. This includes ensuring that staff are available to answer phones, that counters are open 8 hours a day, and that judgments are entered within 72 hours of filing.

Many of Oregon's existing courthouses are in desperate need of upgrade or replacement. Many are too small for the number of cases in their county, and many more do not meet modern standards for safety and security. Fully funded courts will allow the OJD to:

- Open the new Multnomah County Courthouse on time and begin construction of new facilities in Lane, Clackamas, Benton and Linn Counties.
- Maintain minimum security standards in every courthouse and provide seismic protections and system upgrades for the Supreme Court Building.

The Bar supports improving funding to ensure adequate judicial salaries.

- Oregon circuit court judges currently rank 46th in the country in cost-adjusted salary.
- Offering competitive compensation for judges is critical to attracting the most qualified judicial applicants
- Setting Oregon judicial salaries at a fixed percentage of federal judicial salaries would help eliminate the need to return to the legislature year after year to address this problem.

Cuts to court funding do not hit all court users evenly. The courts are constitutionally mandated to make certain payments (such as judicial salaries, interpretive services, and payments to jurors) and are required to handle many criminal cases ahead of civil cases in order to meet constitutional timeliness requirements. This can substantially delay many civil and family law cases and puts the staff that support them at risk.

Citizens' Campaign for Court Funding

- Ensuring that Oregon has an efficient and effective court system that is open and accessible to all Oregonians is a key part of the Oregon State Bar's mission.
 - While we often rightfully focus on the court's important roles in criminal justice, public safety and protecting the rights of vulnerable citizens; Oregon's courts also play a key role ensuring that Oregon's business and nonprofit communities are able to thrive.
- Oregon businesses and nonprofit organizations are put at a significant disadvantage if they lose the ability to resolve disputes quickly and efficiently through the court system.
 - Because courts have constitutional responsibilities to resolve some cases more quickly, when courts are underfunded it is civil cases that are very often the first to be delayed.
 - Criminal cases, some juvenile matters, and resolving abuse prevention orders are just some of the cases that are required to be addressed more quickly.
- To help bring attention to this problem, the Bar created the Citizens' Campaign for Court Funding to bring business and nonprofit leaders from around Oregon together with lawmakers to discuss the importance of a fully funded Judicial Branch to maintain a healthy climate.
- Over the last several months the OSB and CCCF has hosted breakfasts throughout the state in support of adequate court funding. Chief Justice Walters along with attorneys, business leaders, and nonprofit leaders through the state have gathered to discuss the important of funding the courts. Throughout the year we will continue to recruit partners to participate to this important effort.
- Over the next 6 months, the CCCF will work with Oregon business and nonprofit leaders to educate lawmakers on the importance of a fully funded court system and encourage them to seek solutions to the Oregon court system's ongoing funding crisis.
- How can we all support Oregon's Courts?
 - Contact your State Senator and State Representative and encourage them to support adequate funding for Oregon's court system.
 - Share your support for adequate funding for Oregon's court system with leaders in your community.
 - Visit the Citizens' Campaign for Court Funding website for additional resources. (<https://publicaffairs.osbar.org/court-funding/>)