



# CIRCUIT COURT OF OREGON

FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
CLACKAMAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
OREGON CITY, OR 97045

**KATHIE F. STEELE**  
PRESIDING CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

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April 4, 2019

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the record, I am Kathie Steele, Presiding Judge of the Clackamas County Circuit Court.

Clackamas County's courthouse was built in 1936 when our population was around 50,000 people. Today, we're at 419,000 and growing.

Originally the courthouse had three courtrooms. Since then, we've squeezed out all other tenants and have taken advantage of every nook and cranny to max out at 11 courtrooms with an equal number of judges.

Based on the county's population and our immense caseloads, however, we should have at least **14** judges hearing cases. Yet we have no place to put them.

And don't just think of the judges and courtrooms. Consider that the courthouse serves hundreds – sometimes thousands – of people on any given day. This crushing demand has outgrown the facility's design and is woefully insufficient to meet the needs of our residents.

We have a real problem here. Cases are delayed and hearings are regularly postponed. Justice is being delayed for thousands of people every year.

- Parents are waiting months for child support hearings.
- Civil litigation trials are scheduled 1-2 years out.
- We have the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest criminal docket in Oregon for both felonies and misdemeanors resulting in continuances beyond our recommended disposition dates.

We also have significant security and safety challenges.

Our tiny confines force plaintiffs and defendants to be right next to each other. This has the potential to lead to intimidation for multiple parties, potentially compromising fair outcomes.

We lack separate circulation paths for victims, witnesses, prisoners, and defendants. The building's narrow hallways force victims to come into contact with violent offenders and domestic abusers.



And jurors have no sequestration room on site, leaving them exposed to potentially improper communications.

Let me leave you with a statement from Judge Ann Lininger regarding the terrible worries of the tight spaces. She states:

*“Conditions are so cramped that when a defendant is brought into court, he or she can pass within inches of the alleged victim. This is a real problem in cases that involve domestic violence, child abuse or other violent crimes.”*

Thank you for your consideration of this request and we would be happy to answer any questions.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathie F. Steele". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Kathie F. Steele  
Clackamas County Circuit Court Presiding Judge