



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 11, 2019

Honorable Co-Chairs,

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

The Clackamas County Courthouse is not safe; not from fire, not from earthquake. Many of you have seen me carrying this yardstick around the Capitol. This illustrates that a corner of the courthouse is literally three feet from a hundred foot drop into the Willamette River. In recent years, our Sheriff lost a parking spot over the eroding cliff. The Courthouse simply cannot be safely refurbished and needs replacement. Our ADA accessibility meets the legal minimum (although not, in my courtroom). The number of people in the Records Room must be limited because there isn't enough air.

In addition to the physical risk, justice is being delayed for thousands of people. Clackamas County's Courthouse was built in 1936 with one courtroom when our population was around 50,000 people. Today, we're at 419,000 and growing. Today, we're maxed out at 11 courtrooms and 11 judges. Given our population, we should have at least 14 judges yet there is simply no place to put them. This is a real problem. Cases are delayed and hearings are regularly postponed because we don't have enough judges. Parents are waiting months for child support and custody hearings. Civil litigation trials are scheduled 1-2 years out. We have the 6th biggest criminal docket in Oregon for both felonies and misdemeanors resulting in continuances beyond our recommended disposition dates. Finally, our tiny confines have significant security and safety challenges for victims, witnesses, jurors, prisoners, and defendants.

I know our County is committed to replacing the Courthouse and I hope you are too.

Thank you.

Kathie F. Steele
Clackamas County Circuit Court Presiding Judge

