

April 2, 2019

Co-Chair Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Co-Chair Betsy Johnson
Co-Chair Dan Rayfield
Joint Committee on Ways & Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Clackamas County Courthouse Replacement Project

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward, and Rayfield:

We urge your support for \$31.5 million in bond funding, as requested in the Chief Justice's 2019 budget request, to help advance the Clackamas County Courthouse Replacement Project.

Clackamas County's courthouse was built in 1936 in the heart of downtown Oregon City. While it continues to serve hundreds, sometimes thousands, of residents daily, courthouse needs have outgrown the facility's ability to adequately meet the demands of our increasing population and the need to hold hearings in a timely manner.

Presently, Clackamas County's courthouse experiences the following issues daily:

Public Safety

Public safety concerns begin with the findings of a 2015 building assessment which noted the courthouse would experience "significant damage" during a major earthquake and sits on unstable soil. In one location, the courthouse sits three feet from an eroding cliff edge that drops into the Willamette River. If there was a fire, the outdated design would lead to its rapid demise.

Structural Challenges

The courthouse lacks adequate jury assembly space, as well as secured routes for defendants, witnesses, police officers, and prisoners. Secured parking is non-existent for judges and jurors, who must exit through public hallways and access areas to reach their cars.

Building Limitations

The courthouse has undergone many modifications to be able to include the current 11 courtrooms, but there is no more room to grow and the building is now old enough that it cannot be retrofitted

to operate at modern standards. Much of the equipment has become unreliable, and in many spaces exposed wiring can be seen in both working and visiting areas.

Delayed Justice

The 1936 courthouse had three courtrooms and served 50,000 residents. Today, Clackamas County has approximately 419,000 residents. This population requires Clackamas County to have at least 14 courtrooms to adequately serve the public today. Because of the increase in hearings that accompany population growth, cases can typically be delayed for weeks and sometimes months. It is not uncommon for parents to wait several months for a child support hearing, and some civil litigation trials related to property ownership are scheduled one to two years out.

2019 State Funding

The requested \$31.5 million represents one-third of the state's 50% share to the overall costs of the new building, and will launch the design and engineering phase of the estimated \$191.4 million courthouse project.

Clackamas County has committed to requesting the support of voters to pass a general obligation bond to fund its local share of the project, and has also resolved to fund the project by other local means if the voters do not approve a bond measure. **We trust this action by the Board of County Commissioners signals to its residents and the Legislature a sincere level of commitment to advancing this project.**

Clackamas County is grateful to receive consideration for courthouse replacement funds in 2019, and looks forward to working with the state to ensure we meet the public safety needs of our residents and all Oregonians.

Please contact Chris Lyons at clyons@clackamas.us for more information.

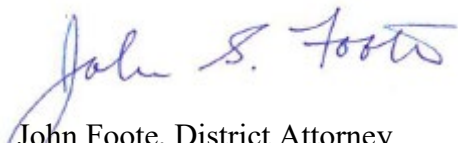
Sincerely,



Jim Bernard, Chair
On behalf of the Clackamas County
Board of Commissioners



Kathie F. Steele, Presiding Judge
Clackamas County Circuit Court



John Foote, District Attorney
Clackamas County

cc: Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction