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Senator Floyd Prozanski

Re: SB696

Senator Prozanski:

I write in support SB 696 which would place, and fund, an animal cruelty and neglect special prosecutor at the Department of Justice division of the Office of Attorney General.

As you are aware the DOJ is currently funded to have several topic specific attorney experts in matters such as DUII, Domestic Violence, Wildlife, and Elder Abuse, etc. These positions have been tasked with educating prosecutors around the state in the specialty areas as well as personally handling prosecutions around the state at the request of the local District Attorney.

Currently, Jacob Kamins has a similar, grant funded position, to handle the cases involving animal cruelty and neglect. For lack of a better term, he is "housed" in Benton County without a permanent logistical accommodation. Animal cruelty and neglect cases are highly specific. Although most counties will get a few of these cases a year, they are insufficient, county by county, to allow for developing the skill and knowledge necessary to routinely and knowledgeably handle them. On the other side, seeing these cases often allows a prosecutor to know which cases should move forward and which do not meet a criminal threshold. My office has assigned Mr. Kamins as a "special prosecutor" on several of these types of cases and found such knowledge and experience to be invaluable.

These cases should be handled with the same kind of expertise that other unique cases, such as elder abuse, wildlife, and domestic violence, require. To have a position precariously funded does a disservice to the kind of attention that the public expects.

I ask that you and your committee support the passage of SB696.

Respectfully,

Bradley C. Berry
Yamhill County District Attorney

BCB: dg
CC: Sharon Harmon, CEO, Oregon Humane Society