

Submitter: Greg Baxter
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB2308
SUBJECT: Support for HB 2308

Chair Kropf and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I want to offer my support for HB 2308. That bill will eliminate the two-tier system of pay for Elected District Attorneys. Prior to becoming the elected Baker County District Attorney in 2019, I worked as a deputy district attorney in Wallowa and Union Counties. I don't think either of those offices have been fully staffed since I left those counties. That meant more work for all of the district attorneys in the office, including the elected District Attorney. The primary reason is that most attorneys in the area can make substantially more money as public defenders. In fact, I was the only attorney who put in for the Baker County District Attorney, in large part because private and public defense attorneys make more than that position pays.

I believe that Oregon has put an appropriate emphasis on helping people maneuver through the criminal justice system. Recent changes in the law have made things more equitable and fair for all. Public defenders get paid a high wage, because it is important that competent attorneys help the accused navigate their cases.

However, there also need to be competent and fair minded district attorneys. My dad was the judge in Baker County for 20 years. He taught me of the importance and power that the county District Attorney holds. We ultimately are the ones who decide what cases need charged. That is a very large responsibility.

I come into my office to get extra work done several nights each week. I get multiple calls from law enforcement and other community partners during off hours. During the work day, I am busy handling the most heinous and serious cases in my county, running an office, and chairing various meetings, including our child abuse and sexual response teams.

District Attorneys should be paid equal throughout the state. Though our tasks may be different depending on the county, the time required to fulfil our jobs and the responsibility that we each hold is the same. For that I would ask that you please eliminate the two-tiers for District Attorneys and pass HB 2308.

Respectfully,

Baker County District Attorney Greg Baxter