



Oregon District Attorneys: Public Safety Investments 2023-25

Oregon is at a pivotal moment for public safety, facing systemwide problems that require systemwide solutions. Together, an accountable and well-functioning defense, prosecution and judiciary uphold the justice system. It's impossible to expand or reduce one arm of the system and maintain balance with the others. As demand for all public sector attorneys has grown, **Oregon has injected important funding into public defense services – but the State has not matched this spending with investments in its courts or prosecuting offices.**

Historically, State financial support for District Attorney services has declined. Since 2011, the State has stopped contributing toward salaries for Deputy DAs, stopped paying witness fees, and relied heavily on counties to supplement the office of the District Attorney to attract and retain skilled, highly qualified attorneys, victim advocates and support staff. **Today, counties fund a majority – about 75% – of District Attorney operations.** It's time to value public safety in Oregon by investing in all branches of the system.

Proposed Legislative Concepts & Policy Option Packages (POPs):

HB 2308/POP 101 – Pay Equity Alignment for District Attorneys (*\$1.49M General Fund*)

Like judges and public defenders, DA compensation is determined by the State. However, unlike the judges and public defenders in their counties, DAs are paid on a two-tier system based on population size of the county they serve. This contributes to a \$21,000+ annual pay gap between DAs with similar qualifications, responsibilities and working conditions, which undervalues their work, places a disproportionate burden on rural counties, and exposes the State to a lawsuit under Oregon's Pay Equity Act. POP 101 eliminates the lower tier to pay all DAs a consistent salary. This simple and cost-effective solution also protects the State from a costly lawsuit while freeing stakeholders and legislators to focus on the broader crises affecting all levels of our criminal justice system.

HB 2311/POP 102 – Salary Adjustment for District Attorneys (*\$3.48M General Fund*)

District Attorneys protect crime victims' rights, promote a balanced approach to justice including treatment and crime reduction strategies, collaborate with community and public safety partners, and advocate for justice. Many also serve as a county's primary law enforcement officer, attending crime scenes, writing search warrants and trying cases ranging from misdemeanors to felonies, from assault and domestic violence to murder trials. Compensation should be commensurate with their roles, but State pay for DAs is often less than lawyers make in the private sector and in other public positions requiring comparable experience. Inadequate compensation harms counties' abilities to attract and retain qualified DAs. POP 102 follows the example of states that have established pay standards tying elected prosecutor salaries to those of other elected officials in the judicial system. It sets State salaries for elected DAs at 100% of what a Circuit Court judge earns so their salaries are comparable to those of other experienced public servants in Oregon courts.

HB 2054/POP 103 – Including DAs and DDAs in Police/Fire PERS (*\$490,753 General Fund*)

Oregon's DAs and Deputy District Attorneys prosecute the most serious criminal cases, from child sex abuse, domestic violence, to gang violence and fraud. Stalking, threats, and risk of physical and psychological harm by those they prosecute is not uncommon. They respond to homicides in the middle of the night, during the

workday, and on weekends and work side by side with other law enforcement to build cases from the ground up. Their jobs are difficult, traumatic, and require exceptional personal sacrifice. Today, many prosecutors are leaving the profession altogether in favor of more competitive, less stressful private sector jobs with better benefits. It's long overdue for career prosecutor benefits to reflect career prosecutor workloads by adding them to the Police and Fire PERS designation. DAs and DDAs are frequently statutorily defined as "law enforcement" throughout Oregon's legal codes. Along with police officers, parole officers, prison guards, firefighters, and 9-1-1 dispatchers, prosecutors are strike prohibited under Oregon law, because a general strike would represent such a profound threat to public safety. Yet they are the only one in that category not included in the Police Fire PERS designation.

HB 2392/POP 104 – Digital DA Investment/Body Cameras (\$14.4M General Fund)

District Attorney offices are facing rising demands to process and review law enforcement body camera footage tied to cases. Even the simplest case can result in hours of recorded footage that requiring review and processing, and these demands are poised to grow even further as more and more law enforcement agencies begin using body cameras. The State can help prioritize and incentivize the use of body-worn cameras by investing in body-camera-specific deputy DA positions and support staff. POP 104 allocates \$200,000 to each county to fund positions needed to review and process body camera footage.

HB 2391/POP 105 – Strengthen DA Services to Crime Victims (\$25.4M General Fund)

Crime victim advocates in DA offices provide a core function of the DAs office, supporting a crime victim through the criminal justice system. They are key partners with community-based partners who support these victims beyond the engagement with the courts. As such, significant investment is needed to support both of these vital efforts. Today, many DA victim advocate positions rely on funding from federal Victims of Crimes Act grants, which have declined annually since 2018. States are now bracing for additional cuts despite an increased need for services resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for BIPOC and other marginalized communities. Without consistent funding, the State must backfill through emergency measures, force counties to absorb the costs or risk losing these programs entirely. Victim advocates in DA offices need dedicated State funding to ensure these lifesaving services continue and are as accessible, seamless and efficient as possible. POP 105 provides funding for one crime victim advocate in DA offices with a single prosecutor and an advocate for every four deputy DAs in offices with more than one prosecutor. It is crucial to note that this funding does not replace allocations for other, community-based advocacy services, that provide additional support for victims and survivors of crimes. Investments are needed in both.

HB 2474/POP 106 – County Costs Related to Indigent Defendants (\$6M General Fund)

The State must continue to cover the discovery expenses for indigent defendants. These funds were previously distributed to the Office of Public Defense Services (OPDS); however, since 2021, OPDS has opposed routing these funds through the agency. Whether OPDS or another entity administers these funds, the State must ensure they reach counties and the discovery costs for indigent defendants are covered. POP 106 provides permanent funding for direct allocation by each county to District Attorneys to allow these services to continue to be reimbursed/offered free of charge to indigent defendants.

POP 107 – Grand Jury Recordation (\$384,000 General Fund)

The 2017 Legislature required counties record all grand jury proceedings. POP 107 supports the continuation of grand jury recordation, providing the necessary funding for ongoing trainings, equipment maintenance, secure long-term cloud storage and transcription costs.

TOTAL DA Public Safety Investment 2023-25: Approximately \$52M