

NYSSA POLICE DEPARTMENT

"Honor, Integrity and Service"

301 Main Street Nyssa, Oregon 97913
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Chief of Police
Donald Ballou, Jr.
DATE: 01/31/25

Sergeants
Greg Armenta & Steve Wilson

FROM: Chief Donald Ballou, Jr.; Nyssa Police Department

TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means: Public Safety

RE: New Courthouse Funding

I am Donald Ballou, Jr., Chief of Police, with the City of Nyssa Police Department. I have been an officer serving this community for over 27 years. I have attended and testified in this same Malheur County Circuit Courthouse for every one of those years. I have worked alongside both the Honorable Judges Lung Hung and Erin Landis when they worked as Assistant District Attorneys and currently as judges.

This letter of support comes with some difficulty for me as a police officer whose faith is eroding in our justice system. I share this sentiment with many other officers and citizens alike. Violent criminals, on a regular basis in our communities, are being brought in and released in a short period of time to terrorize our streets. For example, a convicted cop murderer who killed one of my officers in cold blood ends with a thirty-year sentence WITH a possibility of parole. That is unacceptable to me and a slap in the face knowing that this person may have a chance of being released for his heinous crimes. I hope that a safer and more efficient courthouse will help bridge with better outcomes of accountability for criminals and justice for the victims of their crimes. Therefore, I believe it is necessary for the safety of our citizens that as a police officer and leader that I be in support of this new structure so that outcomes like the example above are nonexistent or, at least, less frequent.

I have observed some of the issues that Judge Hung brings up with the courthouse. My biggest concerns are the safety issues that he mentions for staff with the courts and my department and more importantly, jurors. As a citizen of Malheur County, I have personally served jury time for this court on more than one occasion and shared the concerns that Judge Hung listed. Jurors are subject to contact with defendants, witnesses, officers and other random people and staff. One example, I saw a fellow officer at the courthouse and when I tried to start a casual conversation with him, only for him to stop me and tell me that he was a juror sitting on one of my cases. That is a difficult situation to be in for a juror and a good way to cause a major problem with a case going to trial. I have heard others have a similar issue, which has always brought concern to me. Additionally, officers waiting outside to testify along with hostile witnesses for the defense or defendants themselves create significant safety concern and at the least potential court disruption.

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Another concern I have is the small workspace where I often wonder how the courts store all their documents to meet the requirements of the state and federal laws. One example is being an officer and writer of several search warrants and filing these documents with the courts who must store said documents for a period. This space will, if not already have, fill to capacity. Where will these documents be stored next?

A final concern of mine is having a sizeable space to have grand jury as we are usually placed in a small room to work. As a police officer, I am expected to be professional and my equipment and building to have a professional appearance. We are all attending a courthouse and I believe that courthouse should at least appear as a professional courthouse and not a hole in the wall where we are stuffed into a closet. I believe that appearance hinders building trust with the communities we serve.

Thank you for taking the time to read over this letter and our concerns.

Respectfully,



Donald F. Ballou, Jr.

Chief of Police

Nyssa Police Department

