

Submitter: Sean McCaffrey
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3180

Dear Committee Members,

I'm writing today in support of HB3180, and urge timely study for a swift replacement of the Washington County Circuit Court courthouse.

In February of 2001, I was a staff member in the state House of Representatives in Olympia, Washington when the 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck beneath western Washington and lasted 45-seconds or so. My office was in the basement of a marble and stone building standing four stories above ground (much like our courthouse and judicial services buildings).

Unlike our courthouse and judicial services buildings, these buildings were designed with earthquakes in mind. We emerged from the longest 45 seconds of our lives relatively unscathed, although members of the legislature whose offices were in the upper floors of the state capital were actually thrown across their offices as the building swayed with the earth.

Neither our courthouse nor the judicial services building would be likely to survive a 6.8 magnitude earthquake. If one struck during the middle of a busy day, the casualties could be catastrophic, as several hundred people each day visit the court as parties to cases, witnesses, family members, jurors, lawyers, judges, academics, students and, of course, staff.

In April of 1995, the deadliest act of domestic terrorism occurred when two radicalized white supremacists parked a Ryder Truck just yards away from the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The blast destroyed nearly half the building and damaged more than 300 other structures in the vicinity. 167 people lost their lives.

I had the honor of working for Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett for several years, as a consultant to his office and later as his campaign manager. Oklahoma City is a beautiful, vibrant place with amazing people, incredible sports and industry, and wonderful arts and culture. And yet today, these many years later, the scars of April 19, 1995 are still very real and very raw.

Today, the Washington County Justice Services Building is closer to the street than the Murrah Building in 1995. Please ask yourself this: do we live in safer times? Is America less angry now than then? I believe, with regret, that our nation is more divided today than in 1995, not less. I believe the threats our government and public servants face are more prolific, not less. And I believe public safety in our

government buildings is a primary job of government, one in which our state legislatures will either very publicly succeed or very publicly fail.

As legislators, you face the unenviable task of allocating a finite resources among seemingly infinite demands. And unfortunately, there is very little glory in allocating money to save people's lives before they're at risk. But as someone who made it through a very destructive earthquake, and lived among the survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing, I can't put it more simply than this: it's the right thing to do.

Respectfully,

Sean McCaffrey
Beaverton, OR