

To whom it may concern,

My name is Pete Gassner, and I'm a licensed private investigator in Central Oregon, based in Redmond. I have been a private investigator for almost nine years, and for the last several years, my practice has predominately consisted of criminal defense cases. I primarily work case in Central Oregon, including those in Jefferson County, Deschutes County, and Crook County. However, I often have 2-3 murder cases in other Oregon Counties. Currently, I have additional cases in Wasco County and Klamath County. I am a sole proprietor and independent contractor. The name of my company is Juniper Investigations and Consulting LLC. I have been a regional director, and board member with the Oregon Association of License Investigators (OALI) for over seven years.

As an independent contractor, I'm responsible for all my business expenses, and I do not receive any benefits from the state. That means no health benefits, no paid time off, no retirement, 401K, sick leave, etc. We are reimbursed for mileage at the state rate, but I am responsible for paying for my vehicle and all associated maintenance costs. Additionally, I must pay rent for office space in town, providing me with a proper place to conduct my business and meet with clients. Furthermore, I pay for office supplies, phones, insurances, general administration costs, database subscriptions, etc.

Securing a long-awaited increase to \$75/hour will make a significant difference in My ability to continue working as an investigator and providing quality criminal investigations for public defenders in Central Oregon. The work that criminal defense investigators do is extremely important and we are pivotal piece of the court appointed public defense puzzle. Public defenders cannot adequately represent their clients without private investigators who work cases at the OPDC pre-authorized rate. The public defense crisis in Oregon is well documented and the struggle to recruit, train, and retain quality public defenders is front and center of that crisis. Public defenders need the proper tools, time and support to provide the level of representation to their clients the Oregon constitution demands. If attorneys wore a tool belt, investigators would be the hammer, the nails, tape measure, etc. We conduct the interviews, track down witnesses, serve subpoenas, request and obtain records, provide case research, provide client management, and much, much more.

I have been doing this long enough and have a steady flow of work that I am able to have some semblance of a regular paycheck. However, this took years to accomplish and there are still some months when both the timing and amount of my paycheck(s) are questionable. Getting pre-authorized for a case is just the beginning of the process. Some cases are completed in 1-3 weeks while others drag out for several

months, if not more. We don't submit invoices for a case until the case is closed or we have exhausted the pre-authorized hours for that case. Meaning, once you receive pre-authorization, you may not submit an invoice for that authorization for several months. Yet still, once that invoice is submitted, it will take 5-6 weeks for OPDC to pay that invoice. Imagine trying to begin a career as a private investigator primarily working court appointed criminal defense case. It is difficult at best and nearly impossible if you do not have financial support from a spouse or partner. As such, it is prohibitive in attracting quality criminal defense investigators to our industry. If the rates are increased to \$75/HR, it will provide new investigators with more financial stability to grow their business and establish consistent workflow, and payment.

The pay rate for private investigators has lagged significantly behind inflation for decades. The increase to \$75/HR makes sense based on the 1985 rate of \$25/hour when adjusted for inflation and other considerations. We are asking only to be brought current to the same pay rate that investigators were paid in **1985**. Additionally, the federal rate for investigators is currently \$90/HR and most of us bill our privately retained cases at a minimum of \$100/HR. As a busy investigator, if I must choose between a retained case or an OPDC case, it's difficult to pass up the case which pays twice as much!

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please help us continue providing quality public criminal defense for every eligible Oregonian.

Sincerely,

Pete Gassner.