

Attn: Oregon Legislators

Hello from Eastern Oregon!

My name is Scott Clark and I am a Oregon State Licensed Private Investigator working in Public Defense in Eastern Oregon. I work full time for a public defense firm, and full time does not mean 40 hours per week. We have a large case load and the volume and type of work that we perform leads us to work on projects 7 days a week. I drive my own vehicle, I use my own cell phone, I go wherever I must go and whenever I need to go...24/7.

Our work is tough but rewarding. When one of us wins a case, the entire team cheers. The judges of our county very much appreciate the work that we do (although maybe the DA does not).

In my opinion, good defense is based on good investigation. We struggle to recruit, and we struggle to retain. Our pay is low, too low for what we do, but we do appreciate an increase in wages and would certainly like that increase to begin as soon as possible. I am not sure if this is realized, but the more work an investigator does on a case, the less work the attorney has to do on that same case. Our work saves money and time in the system, and I believe it is the best cost savings that can be tapped into inside of the public defense system. Please help us to do our work (for a reasonable and fair rate of pay) so that the attorneys can do the "attorney work" at their higher rate more effectively and efficiently. This is a key component to resolving the public defense crisis in Oregon.

As a public defense investigator, I would request that the pay rate increase be started in July of this year. The more funding that goes to investigation, the less pressure is on the attorneys of which we do not have enough. This increase is not throwing good money for bad, this increase is to support the entire public defense system at the core of the process...investigation. The added resource in investigation will decrease case processing time and allow for better retention of the great public defense employees that serve our clients in need all over the state of Oregon.

A fact to point out here is that, with more and better investigation, attorneys can take on more cases. I would think that this would make sense and be a core goal for all of us.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and you can contact me below with any questions or comments.

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