

## Maintaining the Court System

- **Budget in Crisis** - Oregon is experiencing what may be the worst budget crises since the Depression. Essential services such as health care, education, and law enforcement are subject to deep cuts. At this time, funding for Oregon's courts and public safety system is particularly at risk. Courts serve an essential function in state government. They enforce the rule of law, upon which our social and economic relationships are based. It is critical that Oregon maintain an open and accessible court system to promote public safety and protect Oregon's most vulnerable citizens.
- **Civil Justice System Threatened** - The courts are critical to preserving the viability of our complex business, economic and social systems. These courts play a vital role in serving children and families and in enforcing economic and property rights.
  - Restraining Orders
  - Evictions
  - Enforcing Contracts
  - Child Custody
  - Collections
  - Water Rights
- **Integrated Public Safety System** - The Judicial Department is just one part of the budget for the Oregon Judicial Branch. The Public Defense Services Commission is a crucial part of the public safety system. If it is not funded adequately to provide court appointed counsel to everyone who needs it, courts cannot proceed on many criminal cases. In considering how to cut budgets, the legislature should keep in mind that disproportional cuts in one area will lead to bottlenecks in other parts of the system.
  - Corrections
  - Law enforcement
  - Prosecution
  - Indigent defense
  - Circuit and Appellate Courts
- **Proportional Funding** - All of these must be must be funded proportionately. Without adequate funding for prosecutors, law enforcement agencies can't charge criminals. Without adequate funding for indigent defense, trials cannot proceed. And without proportional funding for courts, cases cannot be litigated.
- **System Breakdown** – Eighty-eight percent of funding for the Oregon Judicial Department is spent on staffing for the day to day operations of the courts themselves. Irrespective of whether courts are open or closed, when the court cuts back on staffing levels, whether by furlough days or layoffs, the number of cases that the courts can handle is directly affected. **When the Courts can't handle the caseloads, you see a breakdown in both the criminal and civil justice systems.**