

## Strong Courts Build Strong Communities 2019

**1. Access to Justice.** The courts have taken numerous steps to improve efficiency, creating a leaner, meaner system than existed a decade ago. However, further reductions will affect:

- **Quality of Life.** Our communities will be less safe and the business climate will be adversely affected. Without resources to maintain current service levels, reductions in service are inevitable. For example, misdemeanors and most civil cases are lower priority cases and will be handled only as caseload and staffing can manage.
- **Public Safety.** Budgetary reductions will impair the courts' ability to process lower level criminal cases (misdemeanors such as theft and other property crimes); deny speedy access to the justice system for victims, and ultimately diminish our ability to keep our communities safe.
- **Business.** Budget reductions will limit the courts' capacity to process civil cases, which are a mechanism for civilized societies to resolve commercial and business disputes. Keeping the courts open is critical to Oregon's economic recovery. Businesses need to be able to turn to the courts for a quick resolution of business conflicts. Many small businesses – especially in areas such as real estate and finance – rely on the courts on a daily basis. When courts have to close – even for a single day – it costs businesses money.
- **Vulnerable Citizens.** Further reductions will seriously impact the ability of the public to access the courts in times of crisis. These cases are time and staff intensive, but their speedy resolution is critical to the parties involved.
  - Domestic violence restraining orders,
  - Child abuse and neglect cases,
  - Guardianships and protective proceedings.

### 2. Keep the Courthouse Doors Open.

- **Constitutionally / Statutorily mandated.** The court's workload is essentially all constitutionally or statutorily mandated. That court workload comes through the courthouse doors without regard to the level of staffing of our courts.
- **Criminal Case Priority.** Under the federal and Oregon constitutions, criminal cases must be heard before civil cases, potentially leaving civil, small claims, and landlord/tenant cases to languish.
- **Jury Trials.** Every citizen is entitled to his or her day in court.

**3. Justice Delayed is Justice Denied.** In all of these important cases, and inadequately funded court system operated more slowly, depriving all Oregonians of justice under law.