



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 97-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 20, 2017

To: House Judiciary Committee
Representative Jeff Barker, Chair
Representative Andy Olson, Co-Chair
Representative Jennifer Williamson, Co-Chair

Re: **HB 2561** on Public Defense Services Commission – **Support**

The League believes that the State of Oregon should provide access to its courts that meets the diverse needs of all people who use state courts. The League also believes in funding of mandated programs or procedures for the state courts. The appointment of Public Defense Attorneys for indigent persons in juvenile delinquency or criminal cases is a required court procedure and should be adequately funded.

Public Defense Attorneys are critical players in the state court system and in the search for justice. The alleged offender is interviewed and the facts of the crime reviewed to determine if the charges are supported. The Defender can bring new information and investigation of circumstances to a trial or negotiations to resolve a case. In the sentencing phase, defenders can suggest the best use of community resources or state agencies to deal with offender behavioral or substance abuse issues. In other words, public defenders serve an essential role in the justice system and should be paid accordingly.

The League members support the request for compensation equivalent to deputy district attorneys and the recognition that the defender role has equal value to the court system. Lady Justice has 2 scales in balance. Let's keep justice in balance in the system.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Norman Turrill in black ink.

Norman Turrill
LWVOR President

Handwritten signature of Karen Nibler in black ink.

Karen Nibler
LWVOR Social Policy Coordinator