To: Rod Rice, Senior Deputy County Administrator

From: Laura Orr, Washington County Law Librarian

Date: November 13, 2012

Re: Option 3: Alternative Proposal for County & State Law Library Collaboration

PROPOSAL:

- **Phase 1**: The State Law Library creates a Public Law Library Services program for counties that do not have trained law library staff. (At last count there were 18.) Counties with fully-operational law libraries a) will retain funding for existing law library staff and services and b) will provide professional legal research support services to the State Law Library to assist in the development of its new county-outreach program.

- **Phase 2**: When the State Law Library’s Public Law Library Services program is fully operational the State Law Library can work with other counties that want to migrate their county law libraries’ services to the statewide Public Law Library Services program.

- The State Law Library may in time replace all or most of the services provided by the county law libraries including, but not limited to:
  1. Statewide legal research database management, a union (shared) catalog, centralized legal research and self-help services provided via website, telephone, chat, and email to the public, non-law librarians, pro se litigants, practicing attorneys, state and local government lawyers, students and teachers, jails, and local and county courts and nonprofits.
  2. The State Law Library will create and support legal research blogs and websites currently created and maintained by county law libraries and their county governments and provide basic 24/7 website tech support.
  3. State Law Library staff may join the professional county law librarians who currently represent Oregon through active participation on state and national lawyer and law librarian association committees.
  4. A sample RFP for these services can be viewed at: [http://www.co.washington.or.us/LawLibrary/TrainingAdvocacy/public-law-libraries-selected-readings.cfm](http://www.co.washington.or.us/LawLibrary/TrainingAdvocacy/public-law-libraries-selected-readings.cfm), under #4

RATIONALE:

1. This proposal gives the State Law Library important new responsibilities, and, more to the point, it gives it time to develop a plan to assume responsibility for dozens of legal research services currently provided by the county law libraries. The State Law Library’s current legislative and judicial mandates do not include giving top priority to serving the online or print legal research needs of municipal, justice, or local trial court litigants, lawyers, judges, students, paralegals, local government employees or elected officials. This could change, but would require approval by the Oregon Judicial Department and the Legislature.
2. The State Law Library already serves the Circuit Courts. This proposal would be a logical extension of their existing responsibilities. It gives the Legislature, OJD, and the State Law Library time to develop a statewide law library services program that can replace the existing local programs, while retaining a pool of experienced county law librarians who can provide the State Law Library with front-line advice and resources from local law libraries and trial courts during the transition.

3. This proposal would give the State Law Library time to learn about the range of law library and legal research services provided by county law librarians and that municipal and trial court litigants need in each region of the state. The State Law Library would also learn about county purchasing and public sector budgeting rules and practices.

4. This plan would eliminate the upheaval that would occur if all full-service county law libraries closed their doors to tens of thousands of Oregonians on June 30th, 2012.

5. This phased in program gives counties and circuit court judges, county commissioners, and local court litigants time to explore their options for shifting their law library programs to the State Law Library rather than retaining their own local law library.

6. It will allow time for thorough training of volunteers and public librarians who will have to interact with self-represented litigants and other non-attorneys. Law librarians already have experience in this difficult area, where one needs legal research skills and knowledge of principles of legal analysis and the unauthorized practice of law.

7. We don’t know if existing county and state law library statutes would accommodate this plan. We will review that possibility, but the final determination on that score will be made by the Oregon Judicial Department and the Legislature.

BUDGET

A budget is under development. It would provide for 3 "programs," described below, and would cost no more than the $7.4 million the Legislature set in the 2011 Session, and possibly less in future years when the State Law Library has fully implemented a statewide Public Law Library Services program:


2. State Law Library: FY 2013-15: Fund the State Law Library for overseeing the unstaffed county law libraries and providing them with law library services.

3. Administrative costs: FY 2013-15: Fund the State Law Library for Public Law Library Services program development, database licensing initiatives, meetings of county and state law library managers, public law library website hosting, etc.

A sample RFP for law library services might be a useful starting point for discussion: [http://www.co.washington.or.us/LawLibrary/TrainingAdvocacy/public-law-libraries-selected-readings.cfm](http://www.co.washington.or.us/LawLibrary/TrainingAdvocacy/public-law-libraries-selected-readings.cfm) (link to RFP under #4)