

The Honorable Ellen F. Rosenblum
Attorney General of Oregon
Oregon Department of Justice
1162 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-4096



Dear Ms. Rosenblum Attorney General;

Shortly before the November 13, 2015 Oregon Association of Municipal Records (OAMR) Board meeting, one of our members was sent a link to the Attorney General's website, to a meeting notification for the Attorney General's Public Records Law Reform Task Force. It was there that our organization first learned that you had decided to reform the Public Records Law, by assembling a Task Force. We read with interest the minutes from your first meetings in October and November; we applaud efforts to create transparency in government actions. We work very closely with the citizens of our communities, and encourage them to use the rights they have to know how their government works.

As City Recorders, City Clerks, and the other myriad of titles (City Administrators/Managers, City Treasurers, Human Resources, Assistant City Administrators, Risk Controllers, etc.) that our members hold, we are a vital part of local government in Oregon. Most of our cities are considered small, and don't have a City Attorney to which public records requests are routed. Even in cities that are large enough to have an attorney on their staff, public records requests will many times start in the City Recorders' office. For those of us who have hired an outside City Attorney, we will not route a public records request in their direction unless it is exempt, and the requestor is questioning the exemption. As such, we are all very well acquainted with public records law; and in fact, many of us work with public records requests on a daily basis.

In partnership with the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), we were opposed to last year's HB3505, and helped to testify against the bill. While we agreed with the need for reform, the bill that was suggested would have placed an undue financial burden on municipalities. It obviously is time to once again consider the exemptions that apply to public disclosure, and we applaud the efforts to reform this complicated law. Currently, your task force has only one member of the local government on it; Scott Winkels from the LOC. While your meetings are public, we hope that you might consider adding another local government representative to the task force.

We would like to formally ask that a member of our organization be appointed to serve on the Attorney General's Public Records Law Reform Task Force. OAMR has a terrific candidate for the task force, who has testified before the Oregon Legislature at various times in the past. Karin Johnson, MMC, is the City Recorder for the City of Independence, as well as a past President of OAMR. She is currently a member of our Legislative Committee, and is the Chair of the Professional Growth and Leadership Development Committee. She is also an important participant on our Records Management Committee; in fact, she has taught public records law to members of our organization at our conferences, and On-The-Road Workshops. Our Records Management Committee already works in conjunction with the State Archives, and as Mary Beth Herkert, the State Archivist would agree, OAMR is dedicated to Public Records Laws, and to an open and transparent government. We would also ask that you consider

Amber Mathiesen, City Recorder for the City of Salem, to serve as an alternate member of the Task Force from OAMR.

While we realize that the meetings are public, and that anyone can attend, we feel that we can better help guide policy reform to make public records requests, and the laws that govern them more clear and efficient for all involved, if we actually have a member on the task force. We recognize that the issue will not likely proceed to legislation until 2017, and are willing to stay the course with the rest of the task force. Public Records Law Reform is needed; we at OAMR hope that you will include us, and will allow us to be part of this Task Force, where we can do the most good for our citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to be included in the Public Records Request Task Force.

Best Regards;



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cc:
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