



HB 5016

Access to Electronic Legal Information

March 2013

OLA's POSITION

The Oregon Library Association supports equitable access to legal information for all Oregonians.

BACKGROUND

Since the Legislature authorized them in 1907, county law libraries have been funded by a percentage of court filing fees. In 2011, the Legislature passed HB 2710 part of which changed the way counties received funding for mediation/conciliation services and operating law libraries. According to a December 2012 report by the Business Fiscal Services Division, Office of the State Court Administrator, the legislative intent was to provide a General Fund appropriation that was equivalent to the historical funding these programs received in prior years, to the extent possible given budget restraints.

In the fall of 2012, the OLA convened a task force to examine how to achieve its policy goal of equitable access to legal information. Members included representatives of public academic and county law libraries as well as county administrators. The State Law Librarian and the State Librarian served as resources during the discussions. An overall concept for a revised county law library program was not forthcoming. However, there was general support for centralized funding and administration of basic electronic legal information resources. The cost estimate is between \$350,000 and \$400,000 annually depending on the depth of resources licensed and the breadth of access.

OLA also supports continuing to explore ways for counties to partner with the Oregon State Law Library in lieu of operating a local county law library. This is a more complex undertaking as counties would have to agree to pursue this option and funds would need to be appropriated. An adequate program would fund the State Law Library to provide service to these counties through dedicated funds for staff to develop tools, train local providers and offer virtual reference.

RECOMMENDATION

OLA supports an appropriation to the State Law Library to license and manage electronic legal information resources that would be accessible to as many target audiences as possible under licensing agreement.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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