

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington County Circuit Court Creates New Settlement Docket to Address Public Defense Shortage

(Hillsboro, Ore.) – Washington County Circuit Court Presiding Judge Kathleen Proctor today announced that the court has created a Settlement Resolution Docket that will run from May 24 to June 30, 2022, to expedite resolution of criminal cases in the court.

“Resolving cases quickly and appropriately is the fastest way to add public defense capacity in our county,” Proctor said. “We appreciate the cooperation of the district attorney and public defense community in bringing forward cases ready to settle. Some cases will still need to go to trial, and the court will continue to set those cases expeditiously.”

The Settlement Resolution Docket dedicates two judges to resolve and close criminal cases by settlement agreement and changes of plea. They will preside over in-person courtroom sessions, mornings and afternoons, three days a week. Five jury rooms have been designated where defense attorneys can meet with their clients, and additional court staff will be assigned to expedite court processes.

As of May 4, the court set more than 500 cases for Settlement Resolution Hearings. The court has 2,080 pending felony and misdemeanor cases – down 11% from 2,336 one year ago. Of the current pending cases, 1,360 have been pending six months or less, 357 have been pending more than one year, and 219 involve defendants held in custody.

Washington County Circuit Court already has held 111 trials in felony and misdemeanor cases in the first four months of 2022. That total includes 86 jury trials – more than half the total jury trials it held in 2021 and more than any other circuit court in the state.

In 2021, about 535 new felony and misdemeanor cases were filed in the court each month. Through April of 2022, that number has increased to 568.

The court will assess the effectiveness of the new docket in early June, after the first round of proceedings.

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