

District Attorney
Citizen's Budget Advisory Committee
2004/2005 Budget Report

Process

The District Attorney's Office CBAC met during the months of December 2003, January, February and March of 2004. During the meetings the CBAC met with the District Attorney, Chief Deputy Helen Smith and his budget staff. The CBAC was briefed by the District Attorney and staff on the important issues facing the District Attorney's Office with proposed budget cuts and discussed the challenges in the coming year.

Concerns and
Recommendations

- In the past several years, due to County general fund budget constraints, the District Attorney's Office has absorbed substantial cuts to its personnel budget. While many positions have been saved as a result of the implementation of the ITAX, the office again this year is proposing a cut of several important prosecution positions in order to meet the requested general fund constraint. The committee believes that the District Attorney's Office is unique in responsibility to the citizens of Multnomah County. There is literally no safety net and no other resource able to protect the citizens through the prosecution of crimes committed in this County. The Committee believes strongly that further erosion of prosecution services in Multnomah County is not in the best interest of its citizens.
- The committee believes that the District Attorney's Office consistently offers the citizens of Multnomah County a tremendous value for their tax dollar. A recent County Auditor's report indicates that only \$27 per County resident was spent in Fiscal year 2003 and the Office collected over \$29 million dollars in child support for families.
- The committees members are concerned about the potential loss of critical prosecution positions funded by the ITAX should collections fall substantially short of predictions or in the event of a successful repeal effort. Currently, approximately 20% of all Deputy DA positions are funded through ITAX including 75% of Deputy DA's assigned to the Drug Unit. The loss of this many prosecution positions clearly would be catastrophic to the public safety system. The committee strongly urges that proactive planning take place in a timely fashion to address the possible contingencies.
- The CBAC understands and finds it unfortunate that during these difficult fiscal times decisions about basic public safety and prosecution services must be weighed against valuable social, public health and other county services. In anticipation of the sunset of the ITAX, the CBAC strongly recommends that a Public Safety Levy proposal be prepared for the next appropriate general election. The citizens of Multnomah County must be given a choice to fund necessary public safety services.

Emerging Issues:-

- The sunset of the ITAX funding is an important issue that will need to be considered over the next twelve to 18 months. With 20% of all Deputy District Attorneys funded by the ITAX, including 36% of Misdemeanor Trial Deputies and 75% of Drug Unit Deputies, finding a means to sustain these positions is crucial to the prosecution of crime and protection of citizens in Multnomah County.
- The failure of Ballot Measure 30 could again create a shortfall in Indigent Defense funding by the spring of 2005 and foster temporary changes in the offices charging practices similar to those that occurred in the spring of 2003. During that period, because there was no Indigent Defense money except for the most serious felonies, some low level felonies were reduced to misdemeanor crimes and some misdemeanors were reduced to violations. In any case the District Attorney's Office will need the ability to be flexible and respond to that developing situation accordingly.

Members:

Irwin Mandel

Michael Greenlick

Earl Sykes

Dick Wegner

Robert Pung Chair

Dave Simpson

Karen Maine