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March 18, 2020

Oregon District Attorneys Respond to COVID-19 Crisis

Oregon's Elected District Attorneys are doing their absolute best to respond to, and implement, appropriate protocols and measures to address the rapidly evolving threat of COVID-19. This is an unprecedented all-hands-on-deck situation and our members are at the heart of the public safety response. The elected District Attorneys and their dedicated staff are directing *all* their efforts and attention to our local communities at this difficult time.

As part of that massive effort, rest assured that our elected District Attorneys are working closely with their county Presiding Judges, probation & parole offices, public defenders, Local Public Safety Coordinating Councils, Criminal Justice Advisory Committees, county health departments, treatment providers, and local law enforcement partners. We are balancing the demands of public safety in light of public health. Evaluating appropriate custody status, managing in-person hearings and grand jury proceedings, providing guidance to law enforcement on the ground regarding arrest decisions, and altering citation dates to get past the immediate crisis have already been considered by these experienced prosecutors doing the work. Just as our members do every other day, we continue to work with the defense bar on appropriate plea negotiations and dispositions in light of safe and reasonable release measures. All of these decisions are being made at the county level with our local interests at the forefront. As always, our priority remains the safety of victims and our communities, and each case is individually evaluated by prosecutors and defense counsel familiar with the particular facts of each crime, the defendant's history and victim vulnerabilities.

Our elected District Attorneys are further concerned for our own staff and volunteers who provide vital services to the public-many of whom are victims of crime who rely on our ability to help them through their own crises. Each DA is working to minimize risk to our deputy district attorneys and the incredible non-lawyer staff that support our operations. While implementing appropriate social-distancing, good hygiene and increased cleaning efforts, most offices are also working to shrink their in-office footprint, staggering shifts, teleworking, and, in some cases working around the clock as we all respond to this fluid crisis.