

OFFICE OF THE STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER



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To: Montana Public Defender Commission
From: Randi Hood, Chief Public Defender
RE: Report to the Commission

Caseload

I currently have no caseload although I have coordinated the efforts to put together a team in the Cheetham/Miller homicide case, which may become a death penalty case.

Management Team

As you know, I am the leader for the Agency Structural Issues team which included Doug Day, Ed Sheehy, Roberta Drew, and Sherry Staedler. We met in December to once again review the AU issues we were considering. The consensus of the team was to not change any of our recommendations. I presented our recommendations to the Budget and Legislative Committees during their December meetings.

Travels

In December, I traveled to Havre and to Glendive to interview for the regional deputy public defender positions in Regions 6 and 10. As of January 3, 2011, Cynthia Thornton is the new regional person in Region 10 (Glendive) and, as of January 10, Dan Minnis is the new regional person in Havre.

As announced at the October commission meeting, Ed Sheehy, regional deputy public defender for Region 2 (Missoula), moved into a position with the Major Crimes Unit. David Stenerson, the managing attorney in Hamilton, became the regional deputy public defender for Region 2 in December.

While I will very much miss Ed, Dan Boucher and Olivia Norlin and their wise counsel, I am pleased with the people who will be taking over for them.

Legislative Reports and Meetings

The agency spent many hours finalizing the Governor's Report and preparing information as requested by Senator Wanzenried. I have also been devoting my time to preparing for various legislative hearings and preparing fiscal notes. We have reviewed close to two dozen bills for possible fiscal impact. For those that have a material fiscal impact we are running reports out of JustWare and surveying the system to be able to accurately project the fiscal impact. It is a

very time consuming task and will become more so since, with the start of the session, we will have only three days to prepare fiscal notes following receipt of the request.

I also have participated in the agency's legislative outreach plan by meeting with legislators. Harry and I also met with Representative Steve Gibson who is the chair of our budget sub-committee.

John R. Justice Loan Forgiveness

The Board of Crime Control has opened the application process for loan forgiveness grants. The process closes before mid-February since that is the timeframe for reviewing applications.

Participation on Other Boards and Committees

In November, John Connor and I presented a half-day session on criminal procedure to the judges in the courts of limited jurisdiction. This was part of their certification process. During the time I was there, I was approached by six or eight justices of the peace and municipal court judges who told me that they thought the system was working well in their areas. They all spoke highly of the attorneys we have in their courts.

I also spent several days in meetings of the Board of Crime Control which was dealing with significant personnel problems.

Management Meetings

I met with my Executive Committee to continue progress on our Top 10 projects list. We were able to move the Orientation program off the list as it is now complete.

I have had three conference calls with the Regional Deputy Public Defenders in recent weeks to discuss legislative outreach and various issues related to legislation.