



Sept 17, 2020

Members of the Public Records Advisory Committee:

In light of Public Records Advocate Becky Chiao's memo, the Society of Professional Journalists, Oregon Territory Chapter, offers the following thoughts:

The PRAC should maintain a relentless focus on the need for the office of the PRA to continue its impactful work.

- Public comment and emails showing gratitude from members of the public and local and state officials establish irrefutably that the Records Advocate's office has been a very impactful force for good government in Oregon notwithstanding its recent creation, tiny budget and size.
- The PRA office saves money by promoting shared understanding of a complex law, lowering the likelihood of wasteful litigation and helping officials assist the public efficiently and effectively.
- Over time the office will have an even greater impact. Oregon cannot afford to see this crucial institution waylaid by concerns over independence or disagreement over how to ensure independence. As Gov. Kate Brown stated on Sept. 17, 2019, the office simply must be independent.

Funding concern appears to have partly driven the Advocate's memo.

- As the PRAC has discussed, in the long-term a dedicated source of funding would benefit the Advocate's office. We urge the PRAC to form a subcommittee to explore that for future legislation, i.e. 2022-3.

Thank you for keeping the public and good government uppermost in mind.

-Rachel Alexander, President, Oregon Territory Society of Professional Journalists.
Co-chair, OTSPJ Freedom of Information Committee