Washington State Senate

Senator Debbie Regala

Majority Caucus Vice Chair
27th Legislative District

233 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40427
Olympia, WA 98504-0427

Phone: (360) 786-7652
FAX: (360) 786-1446
E-mail: regala.debbie@leg.wa.gov

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The Honorable Justice Mary Fairhurst, Chair,
and Members of the Judicial Information Systems Committee
PO Box 40929
Olympia, WA 98504-0929

Dear Justice Fairhurst and Committee Members:

In your current Request for Proposals process to modernize the Judicial Information Systems, and I am writing to ask that the system be designed to accommodate future policy changes the legislature may adopt.

In the past two regular legislative sessions, I sponsored SB 5019 which would have made confidential the non- conviction records of people never convicted of crimes who, nonetheless, continue to suffer the stigma of having their names tied to criminal charges in court records. The bill had widespread support, but ultimately did not pass, largely because we were told that the Judicial Information computer systems would require very expensive work in order to accommodate such policy changes because of its antiquated nature.

We are aware of a number of other situations future legislatures may wish to address as well, such as:

- Vacated records, where individuals are told they may say they have never been convicted, yet the judicial computer system continues to tie them to the original charge;
- Domestic Violence restraining orders, where victims' names are published and they subsequently lose housing or job opportunities; and
- Unlawful Detainer actions, where people have difficulty renting a home even if they prevail in court.

I am aware that many cases in the judicial computer systems are already not available to the public, including mental health, family law, and others. As you modernize your computer systems, the capability to make policy changes like those mentioned above that would expand these categories should be built into the system.

Thank you.

Debbie Regala

Debbie Regala
State Senator, 27th Legislative