

**From:** [OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK](#)  
**To:** [Martinez, Jacquelynn](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Changes in case loads for indigent defense  
**Date:** Thursday, June 13, 2024 1:09:48 PM

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**From:** Gunner Fulmer <gfulmer@co.walla-walla.wa.us>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 13, 2024 10:16 AM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>  
**Subject:** Changes in case loads for indigent defense

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Honorable Washington Supreme Courts,

I am writing regarding proposed case load standards that you will be looking at for defense attorneys and indigent defense. Changing caseload standards for our attorneys will have dramatic financial consequences for our County.

As you are probably aware, counties in Washington State are having an extremely hard time finding attorneys to work in our courts and the costs of indigent defense has increased over the years, leaving counties to fund a large majority of these court costs. In 2012, Walla Walla County spent \$654,392.03 on indigent defense, and in 2022, Walla Walla County had expenditures of \$1,043,087.07 on indigent defense. As you can see costs have increased dramatically over a 10-year period for our county. These costs do not include State assistance. These costs come directly out of the Walla Walla County budget.

Changing case load standards would require Walla Walla County to seek more attorneys, which would come at a cost that the county cannot sustain. The proposed case load standards as of 2027 would increase the number of indigent attorneys by 57% in Walla Walla County. I have spoken with several of our current defense attorneys who have stated they will not continue to work under the umbrella of the county doing defense work if these changes are made. Currently, several of the attorneys do nothing but defense work under the county umbrella, but, when cases get reduced, they will not be able to make the wages they currently bring in. This change will force them to go back to private attorney work. The other option would be to increase the pay for each case (or case credit) that they cover to offset the reduced case load. Walla Walla County does not have the budget to utilize that option. I believe most every county in the state of Washington does not have the budget to utilize that option.

Washington State needs to step up and start helping counties in the very near future or this system is going to collapse as we can't keep covering the increases. Please keep all counties in mind while making this decision as it affects us and our citizens greatly.

*Respectfully,*

***Gunner Fulmer***  
***Walla Walla County Commissioner***

***District 3***

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*Our Mission: To Provide Walla Walla County with Leadership, financial stability, and the ability to listen to the concerns of our constituents and the courage to take action if needed. To represent all areas throughout Walla Walla County, bringing equitable solutions to constituents concerns.*