

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Introducing the New Oregon Law Help Public Portal

Innovation Into Opportunity

By David Rosen

As lawyers, I believe we have a duty to use our position to work toward ensuring access to justice for all. This goes beyond our clients and to the heart of being a part of a system rooted in law. If justice is our goal, then equitable access must be our cause. For decades, Oregon lawyers have dedicated time and creativity to this vital cause. The work is not done.

This is why it is such a privilege to share news of a promising new program rolling out incrementally throughout the year.

For several decades, Oregonians in need of legal help or legal information have turned to several statewide entities for reliable information. The Oregon State Bar, the Oregon Judicial Department and Oregon's statewide legal services providers, Legal Aid Services of Oregon and Oregon Law Center, have hosted public facing websites with volumes of information about Oregon law and courts, individual rights, how to manage one's own legal issue, and where to find a lawyer when you need one.

Both staff and volunteer lawyers for these entities were charged with regularly updating all this information — on multiple websites — in response to statutory changes, new case law and updates to court rules or standard practices.

Meanwhile, the Oregon Law Foundation has been a core funder, supporter and partner to many of the state providers who advance this legal service work. And more recently, Oregon Consumer Justice has joined this network of legal service entities dedicated to ensuring that Oregonians can find the help and information they need from trusted sources.

For the past four years, these six partners have been working together to offer a better way for Oregonians to learn about their legal rights and service options.



Oregon Law Help is a website that connects you with civil legal information, forms and resources, including:

<p>Legal Information Use our Interactive Guide or browse our Legal Information Library.</p>	<p>Legal Help Find free or low-cost legal help in Oregon with our Referral Database.</p>	<p>Community Resources Connect with community help related to your legal issue.</p>
<p>Housing & Family Law Help Get information on housing and family law, such as rental rights, divorce, child custody, child/spousal support and protective orders.</p>		

The Oregon Law Help website is created by:
Oregon State Bar • Oregon Judicial Department • Legal Aid Services of Oregon
Oregon Law Center • Oregon Law Foundation • Oregon Consumer Justice

HERE TO HELP YOU

Visit www.OregonLawHelp.org to get started.

MORE HELP COMING SOON



Innovation Brings Opportunity

As this tech-heavy edition of the *Bulletin* demonstrates, times change. And with innovation comes opportunity.

This January, the new Oregon Law Help online portal went live in its initial “soft launch” phase. It is a game-changer for how the public will find the legal help they need.

And for the first time, it brings the vital content of all four of the aforementioned partners into one accessible site.

Oregon Law Help is highly interactive, employing technology to help guide users through a series of questions to pinpoint their legal issues and direct them to either the information they need or to the best

option for finding a lawyer or legal professional. The information is presented at accessible reading levels, according to the latest science guiding how consumers access and understand information.

The site launched in English and Spanish (with plans for additional languages) with content on family law, personal safety, housing law and Oregon courts. In a rolling release, new areas of law will be added throughout 2024 and 2025. As each new topic is added, partner entities will remove duplicative information from their website and guide users to a centralized location and support with the goal of having one user-friendly entry point for the public.

This is just the beginning. The site developers and statewide partners have intentionally designed an agile product that will continuously learn and adapt to how it is being used and respond to user and partner feedback. With sophisticated analytics integrated into development, this inaugural product will only get better. Rather than a service that updates at regularly scheduled intervals (every few years, as in traditional website management), the technological and conceptual framework ensures that Oregon Law Help will continuously update and improve. Staff is already examining ways to safely leverage generative AI, which will add even more robust enhancement capabilities to the site eventually.

In today's age, the journey of an individual seeking help to navigate a complex legal crisis will almost always begin on their cell phone, or sitting at a public computer, or staring into a laptop screen. The evolution of technology offers powerful new tools — for our public and for attorneys.

With this new site, we can harness technology during that moment of vulnerability to offer a pathway to quick, meaningful help from trusted sources in the legal services sector.

Oregon's Collaborative Approach

To call this project a “big lift” would be an understatement. In another demonstration of Oregon's commitment to collaboration in the legal services space, this multi-partner effort began in 2020 and has involved expertise spanning legal, communications and technology sectors across the state.

For those who have been tracking the work, it is gratifying to see it come to fruition.

For those who will ultimately benefit from this resource, we have high hopes that it will get the right help quickly into the hands of those who most need it.

A very hearty thank you and congratulations to all the people and organizations who brought the Oregon Law Help project to fruition. This work not only marks a new era in our collective efforts to improve access to justice, but also serves as a shining example of the brilliant work that can be accomplished when we put our efforts together.

Lawyers interested in supporting this project can visit OregonLawHelp.org/get-involved for information on ways to get involved. The Oregon Law Help team welcomes feedback and invites lawyers with subject-matter expertise to consider taking a more active role by joining the Oregon Law Help content taskforce. ■



David Rosen is the 2024 president of the Oregon State Bar. He is the founder of High Desert Law in Bend. Reach him at drosen@osbar.org.

Legal Ethics Assistance

The bar's General Counsel's Office is available to discuss prospective legal ethics questions related to a member's own conduct. A staff attorney can help identify applicable ethics rules, point out relevant formal ethics opinions and other resources and share an initial reaction to callers' ethics questions.

The assistance that bar staff provides is informal and nonbinding and is not confidential; no attorney-client relationship is established between callers and the lawyers employed by the Oregon State Bar. (Lawyers seeking confidential ethics advice about the propriety of their previous decisions or actions should consult a private attorney.)

Members with questions can call the ethics helpline at (503) 431-6475 to be connected to the first available bar staff attorney.

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