

STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE:	May 27, 2025
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CATEGORY: Regular Calendar 7

SUBJECT: Discuss and consider directing staff to create alternately staffed Legal Secretary I/II Classifications.

DEPARTMENT: District Attorney

SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT #: All

DEPARTMENT CONTACT: Stephanie A. Bridgett, District Attorney, (530) 245-6300

STAFF REPORT APPROVED BY: Terri Honer, Chief Fiscal Officer

<u>Vote Required?</u>	<u>General Fund Impact?</u>
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Simple Majority Vote

<u>Vote Required?</u>	<u>General Fund Impact?</u>
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General Fund Impact

<u>RECOMMENDATION</u>

Discuss and consider directing staff to create alternately staffed Legal Secretary I/II Classification.

DISCUSSION

During the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget Hearings, the Board of Supervisors requested the District Attorney return with a presentation regarding creating a Legal Secretary I/II Classification.

Shasta County currently only offers the position of Legal Secretary. This position *“Performs difficult legal secretarial and clerical duties involving the use of considerable independent judgment; may perform routine administrative duties; composes routine memoranda, contracts, resolutions, ordinances and letters; maintains Law Library; may perform legal research; prepares legal forms necessary for filing cases before court, including briefs, motions and orders, warrants, citations, complaints, subpoenas, petitions and resolutions; answers correspondence independently; maintains calendar and schedules appointments for the manager; answers the telephone and interviews callers, exercising considerable judgment in giving out information and referring to the proper person; makes travel arrangements; installs and maintains filing systems and other clerical procedures; prepares payroll and prepares a variety of bills and invoices; opens, sorts and distributes mail; operates a variety of modern office appliances and orders office supplies as necessary; assists in budget preparation and administration; prepares financial and statistical reports; may supervise, train, and evaluate a small staff.”*

The Shasta County District Attorney’s office is requesting that Personnel create a Legal Secretary I/II Classification to differentiate duties between less experienced Legal Secretaries and those who are more tenured. The District Attorney’s office would not be the only County Department to benefit from having a two-tiered Legal Secretary Classification. The adopted Fiscal Year 2024-25 Position Allocation List approved a total of 16 FTE Legal Secretary positions as follows:

District Attorney: 8 FTE Legal Secretary
County Counsel: 2 FTE Legal Secretary-Conf.
Public Defender: 4 FTE Legal Secretary
HHSA Social Services: 2 FTE Legal Secretary

Public Defender and Public Guardian both have Legal Secretary positions in their departments and support adding the Legal Secretary I/II Classifications to the County Position Allocation List.

Legal Secretary work takes time to learn, and that knowledge is gained over the course of years. The Legal Secretary II Classification handle more complex responsibilities along with difficult cases such as homicides and high-profile cases. The

individual would possess years of experience in supporting attorneys and processing a large variety of legal documents with precise accuracy. A Legal Secretary II would be depended on to perform advanced duties under minimal supervision, allowing their supervisor more time away from constant training for new legal secretaries, whereas newer or less experienced Legal Secretaries would benefit from being trained, guided, and mentored. Building a foundation for a level II Legal Secretary could set a level I Legal Secretary on a good career path to strive for advancement and become a long time County employee, greatly adding a benefit to their department and reducing employee overturn.

Over the years, the District Attorney's office has seen turnover in staff due to being their pay being topped out within a short amount of time, turning staff to look for other jobs for more money and opportunities for advancement, putting the Department back to square one to hire a new Legal Secretary. Due to the special nature of each Department and their case management systems and duties, training a new Legal Secretary takes a long time for them to be proficient in all the roles within the office and reduces the trainer's ability to do their work.

The amount of criminal case filings continues to exceed the support staff allocated to the District Attorney's office. Comparable counties have twice the Legal Secretaries with less cases. This is another reason why Legal Secretaries leave for other jobs; they can make more money for less stressful work. Adding a level II classification not only allows for growth within the Department but also recognizes the high stress, heavier workloads and serious nature of cases that Legal Secretary IIs will handle.

The Legal Secretary position has limited growth opportunity and tops out within 4.5 years. By adding a Legal Secretary I/II Classification, Shasta County would become more competitive in the job market, and it would extend the 4.5 years of step increases, creating longevity for this position and providing the County with more experienced Legal Secretaries. Butte County, San Mateo County and El Dorado County are all examples of counties offering a tiered Legal Secretary classification.

ALTERNATIVES

The Board may choose not to receive the request or additional information. Should the Board decline to add the Legal Secretary I/II Classifications, the District Attorney's office deficient staffing allocations, heavy workload and high turnover rate, leading to delayed case processing, would remain status quo.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

County Counsel, Probation, Public Defender and Health and Human Services – Public Guardian are supportive.

The County Administrative Office (CAO) and Personnel do not support the additional classification for lack of distinction of job duties, concern regarding compaction with other related positions within the County, and increased costs to departments that are heavily General Funded.

Personnel and the CAO's feedback is that they are typically not supportive of providing increases to wages where there have been no changes in duties. Further, Personnel is not compelled that the addition of a II level position will provide a meaningful impact to the recruitment and retention of employees working in these positions; as proposed a 5% increase would provide only one additional year of pay increases to an employee who is at the top step of their salary range. Some positions by nature will tend to have shorter retention periods as employees look to advance their career and salaries within the County. However, should this be approved, Personnel would complete a thorough review of the current and proposed classifications, review the proposed salary structure as well as complete a salary study, and bring back to the Board a recommendation regarding appropriate pay scales for the Legal Secretary I/II Classification.

FISCAL IMPACT

The General Fund impact with adding the Secretary II Classification to the District Attorney's Office is \$34,242.54 in Salaries and Benefits, which includes compaction to the Legal Secretary Supervisor Classification. The General Fund impact to for the Public Defender's Office is \$22,954.61; Probation is \$3,924.84; and County Counsel's Office is \$8,175.87. The total General Fund Impact is \$69,297.86. Fiscal Year 2025-26 Requested budgets do not include sufficient appropriations for the added Legal Secretary I/II Classification and a budget amendment would be required.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1: Legal Secretary Pay Schedule May 2025
2. Legal Secretary I Classification Redline
3. Legal Secretary II Classification Redline
4. Legal Secretary Supervisor Classification Redline

