



# ORLEANS PUBLIC DEFENDERS

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**PUBLIC DEFENSE STILL ESSENTIAL IN MAYOR LANDRIEU’S 2014 BUDGET**  
*Additional Racketeering Defense Appropriation Step in the Right Direction*

New Orleans, LA – Mayor Landrieu once again proved his commitment to a fair and balanced criminal justice system today with the continued funding of the Orleans Public Defenders (OPD) in his 2014 budget. While the general appropriation is a near \$150,000 decrease, the additional \$232,000 appropriation for defense in racketeering cases will hopefully help stave off further private bar pro bono representation needs for the mayor’s Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS). OPD’s \$940,000 appropriation remains significantly less than the NOPD, the Sheriff and the District Attorney.

“The mayor’s continued support for OPD and public defense in New Orleans is another step toward a fair and just criminal justice system, and the additional GVRS appropriation is certainly a big part of that,” said Chief Public Defender Derwyn Bunton. “However, the persistent resource disparity within the criminal justice system threatens an efficient, reliable court system and hinders our ability to keep up with the growing and complex demands our criminal justice system. Until OPD secures stable, reliable and adequate funding, we remain vulnerable to service restrictions.”

OPD currently represents more than 80% of defendants in Criminal, Municipal and Traffic court. The implementation of sweeping multi-defendant indictments has brought court proceedings to a standstill as judges work to secure pro bono representation due to OPD’s inadequate resources. Inconsistent and inadequate funding have always challenged OPD’s operations, making the city’s appropriation especially crucial to maintain efficient and effective representation in the face of increasing caseloads. When OPD cannot operate at full capacity, the entire criminal justice system falters, causing delays in justice for victims, defendants and the public.

The Orleans Public Defenders Office (OPD) exists to provide the citizens of Orleans Parish with the highest quality, client-centered legal representation in Louisiana’s criminal justice system. Our vision is to create a community-oriented defender office built upon the zealous defense of the poor and indigent, while acknowledging the strengths of clients, families and communities. OPD acts to 1) protect the guarantees of the Louisiana and United States Constitutions and maintain adherence to the rule of law; 2) foster a more open and inclusive society by increasing access to, and protection within, the courts for the poor and indigent; and 3) assist in the development and expansion of rehabilitation and alternative programs for clients and their families.

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