***MEDIA RELEASE***

**Date:** December 27, 2023

**Re:** Status of Deputy Employment

Just before 3pm on Tuesday (12/26), the Sheriff was informed by Commissioner Henslee that during the BOCC meeting held the previous Friday (12/22), a decision had been made to not terminate the employment of Deputy Erick Kaber and Sergeant Ryan Kaber on December 27th. That date was scheduled by Human Resources and the BOCC following their September 27th meeting and is documented by a series of emails and letters received by the deputies informing them of the date their loss of benefits would begin. The 90-day ultimatum for either the Sheriff to resign his elected position or his family members law enforcement careers with Klamath County would end, barring a “creative” solution, has been suspended for the time being. During the conversation, there was no indication that the topic wouldn’t be picked up again at a later date by the Board. Later Tuesday afternoon, the two deputies received email confirmation from the Human Resources Director indicating that, “your employment status with Klamath County will not change on December 27, 2023.”

The Sheriff contends that the Constitution of the State of Oregon, state law, and prior Oregon Attorney General opinions give the Office of Sheriff the sole authority in organizing the office and appointing deputies while the authority of the county board, and by proxy the Human Resources Department, is limited. (Refer to Oregon Revised Statutes 206.210, 204.116, 204.635, 204.601) . The Office of the Sheriff is not a “department” of the county and the Sheriff believes this is an important distinction worth defending for reasons related to the Constitutional protections to the public provided by an elected Sheriff. As a result of this opinion, arbitrary county policies do not govern the employees of the Sheriff’s Office in the same manner as other county employees.

It does appear that the governing body of the county and their legal team disagrees with this assessment, therefore, the Sheriff intends to pursue a legal resolution to the questions raised by these differing viewpoints.