

**JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS**

455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California 94102-3688

Report

TO: Members of the Judicial Council

FROM: Executive and Planning Committee
Hon. Richard D. Huffman, Chair
Mr. William C. Vickrey, Administrative Director of the Courts
Mr. Kenneth L. Kann, Director, Executive Office Programs
Ms. Dianne Bolotte, Assistant Director, Executive Office Programs
415-865-7633

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SUBJECT: Final Report: *Trust and Confidence in the California Courts, Phase II: Public Court Users and Judicial Branch Members Talk About the California Courts (For Information Only)*

Issue Statement

In 2005, as part of the 2006–2012 judicial branch strategic planning cycle, the Judicial Council directed the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to undertake a statewide survey of the public and of practicing attorneys to assess current levels of trust and confidence in the state courts and to obtain information concerning expectations and performance. The survey, phase I of an ongoing public trust and confidence study, reached over 2,400 members of the public and over 500 practicing attorneys. The report and findings of the phase I study, *Trust and Confidence in the California Courts: A Survey of the Public and Attorneys*, was released in September 2005.

The Judicial Council directed AOC staff, beginning in late 2005 and through the first half of 2006, to delve more deeply into key issues raised by stakeholders in phase I of the study. Using focus groups and interviews, phase II researchers sought direct information from court users—new information to yield specific, effective strategies for addressing customer concerns identified by the 2005 survey. Separate focus groups conducted with members of the judicial branch—both judicial officers and court administrators—yielded an insiders’ perspective on the California courts and helped identify additional possible means of improving the delivery of justice. Several interviews were conducted with business and community leaders, as well as with individual providers of private alternative dispute resolution services and attorneys who use such services.

Public Agenda (New York, New York) and Doble Research Associates (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey) were hired to conduct phase II. Public Agenda's research strives to bridge the gap between American leaders and what the public really thinks about issues including education, foreign policy, immigration and religion. Doble Research Associates is a nonpartisan firm that uses focus groups and interviews to give clients a blueprint of how and why people feel as they do about complex public issues or new ideas. David B. Rottman, Ph.D., principal research consultant for the National Center for State Courts and author of the phase I findings report, assisted the phase II researchers.

The two-part public trust and confidence study of the state's judicial system represents a significant accomplishment toward ensuring that Californians have a voice in shaping the strategic priorities and policies that guide their court system. The new study report, *Trust and Confidence in the California Courts, Phase II: Public Court Users and Judicial Branch Members Talk About the California Courts*, has confirmed that the public has a high regard for the courts, particularly for judges, and expands on themes identified in phase I (such as the importance of procedural fairness and its impact on public confidence and approval of the courts).

Comments From Interested Parties

Members of the Judicial Council and its Executive and Planning Committee have been involved in all stages of the phase II research study—including determining the scope of the assessment methodology and the identification and invitation of key interview participants. Members of the Judicial Council and the AOC executive team were invited to observe focus groups conducted with the public.

In addition to focus groups with court users, judicial officers, and court administrators, the researchers conducted one-on-one interviews with business and community leaders to ensure a broad range of stakeholder input.

On June 28, 2006, Public Agenda presented preliminary findings to the Judicial Council and key stakeholders during the council's strategic planning meeting. The presentation included findings from both phase I and phase II of the public trust and confidence study and video clips from the public focus groups showcasing comments about the courts. Attendees at this meeting were invited to comment on the preliminary report and to offer input that has informed the final report presented today for public release.

Implementation Requirements and Costs

Not applicable.

Next Steps

Staff will distribute the phase II report within the branch and to justice system partners. The findings from this report will provide valuable information that can be used by court leaders and help to shape and inform local court strategic plans. The report will assist in

fostering collaborations with justice system partners toward the creation of programs that are responsive to the issues and needs identified by the public and other branch stakeholders.

Attachments (report and companion DVD) to be handed out prior to meeting