



NEWS RELEASE

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Judicial Council Approves New Judgeship Allocations for State Courts

New Trial Court Judges Sought Due to Growing Caseloads, Population Increases

San Francisco—At a public meeting today, the Judicial Council of California approved an update to its 2004 judicial workload assessment to ensure that courts with the greatest need are on a priority list to receive 100 new judicial officers that the council is seeking in the next two years.

The updated judicial workload study uses the latest case filings data to measure the number of judicial officers that each court needs to effectively serve the public. The study also estimates the number of subordinate judicial officers (SJOs) that each court should have.

California trial courts urgently need new judgeships to make up for historic underfunding of the courts and growing caseloads. During the last legislative session, the Governor and Legislature approved 50 new judgeships that will be allocated to courts with the greatest need for new judicial officers.

A study by the National Center for State Courts showed that California needed about 350 new judicial positions in 2001. Due to a growth in workload, especially in the area of criminal law, the need for new judicial positions has grown despite the creation of 50 new positions by the Legislature.

Consistent with the plan adopted by the Judicial Council in 2004, the updated report recommends seeking the most urgently needed additional 100 judges to improve access to justice for the public.

SUBORDINATE JUDICIAL OFFICERS

In a related action, the Judicial Council adopted a policy that contains criteria for approving trial court requests for changes in the number of authorized SJOs. To ensure a consistent statewide approach to creating such positions, the council approved a policy that limits SJOs to courts with funding for such positions and a demonstrated need for them.

OTHER ACTIONS

In other actions, the Judicial Council:

Funding for Judgeships: Approved the allocation of funding for operating and facilities costs for the 50 new judgeships created in the Budget Act of 2006.

Uniform Civil Fees: Approved a report submitted by the Task Force on Civil Fees that contains recommendations on amendments to the uniform civil fee statutes to clarify specific fees and improve their effectiveness and recommended that the Legislature establish a Commission on Civil Fees in the Courts that would meet biennially to consider possible changes in civil fees. The recommendations were made by the Task Force on Civil Fees.

Mediation Week: Approved a resolution that recognizes the third week in March as “Mediation Week,” to coincide with similar recognitions by the Governor and other public agencies. The goal of the week is to encourage courts to implement and improve mediation programs and to promote public awareness and use of such programs.

Science and the Law: Approved a recommendation to improve the judicial management of issues involving science, technology, and the law. As recommended by the Steering Committee on Science and the Law, the council directed 1) the Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER) to facilitate an exchange of information between the courts and the science and technology communities to assess emerging issues, resources, and potential partnerships, and 2) standing advisory committees and task forces to monitor the impact of science and technology developments in California courts and identify priorities and recommend effective approaches.

The council’s complete agenda is online at
<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/age022307.pdf>.

The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.