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Chief Justice Asks Assigned Judges To Waive Pay One Day a Month

Proposal Seeks To Reduce Budget Shortfall While Still Providing Service to State Trial Courts

San Francisco – Because of the state’s fiscal crisis, Chief Justice Ronald M. George has asked the 400 judges participating in California’s Assigned Judges Program (AJP) to consider voluntarily waiving compensation for at least one day of service in both May and June of this year.

The plan is designed to reduce the budget shortfall facing the AJP while enabling the trial courts to continue to efficiently handle their caseloads. Under this program, courts routinely ask the Chief Justice to appoint retired judges to assist with congested case calendars and to cover for judicial vacancies, absences due to illnesses, and disqualifications.

“The state is facing a serious budget crisis and the judicial branch budget has not been spared from funding cuts during this fiscal year,” stated Chief Justice George. “The large number of judicial vacancies in the state, a steadily increasing caseload, and the continuing insufficient number of authorized judicial positions statewide have made the need for assigned judge assistance more crucial than ever.”

However, despite close monitoring of the budget and efforts by the trial courts to more efficiently use their assigned judges, projections through the end of the fiscal year indicate that the program will exceed its funding by \$500,000–\$700,000.

The Chief Justice’s request is consistent with a Judicial Council proposal to sponsor legislation that will enable the judicial branch to close the courts statewide for one day per month. If this proposal is approved by the Legislature, active judicial officers also will be asked to voluntarily waive compensation for the one day per month the courts are closed, beginning July 1.

The request is also similar to the voluntary furlough program in place for staff of the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, and Administrative Office of the Courts. Since January 1, 2009, many of those staff have participated in a one-day-per-month furlough program, with a 5 percent salary reduction. Together, all of these efforts will have a positive impact on the anticipated judicial branch

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budget cuts in the months ahead.

For more information on the Assigned Judges Program, please see this fact sheet http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/documents/factsheets/Assigned_Judges_Program.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.