



NEWS RELEASE

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JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF
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Public Hearing Set April 20 on Access to Justice in California Courts

Public, Judges, Court Experts to Testify

San Francisco—The public's growing need for expanded court services and improved access to justice will be the focus of a public hearing sponsored by the Judicial Council of California from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 20, 2006, in the Hiram W. Johnson State Office Building, Third Floor, Judicial Council Conference Center, 455 Golden Gate Ave.

The hearing will be co-sponsored with Senator Joe Dunn, chair of the Senate Committee on Judiciary; Assembly Member Dave Jones, chair of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary; and the State Bar of California.

Speakers will include members of the public who have struggled to get their legal needs met in court, as well as judges and court experts. Issues will include the following:

- Language barriers in the courts of California, the most diverse state in the nation, and the need for increased language access and interpreter services.
- Special cultural and linguistic challenges faced by immigrant populations who use court programs and services.
- The urgent need for more self-help centers to assist the increasing number of Californians who cannot afford legal representation.
- How the public's trust and confidence in the courts is affected by the shortage of judgeships, dilapidated and unsafe courthouses, and the need for greater diversity in judicial appointments.

Those offering testimony will include:

- **Court of Appeal Justice Laurie Zelon**, of the Second Appellate District,

(over)

founding chair of the California Commission on Access to Justice. She will focus on the Californians most affected when access to courts is limited, and will discuss the future for court users in our state and their access needs.

- **Dr. David Rottman**, researcher at the National Center for State Courts and principal research consultant for *Trust and Confidence in the California Courts: A Survey of the Public and Attorneys*, the statewide survey issued by the Judicial Council last fall.
- **Presiding Judge Larry Allen**, of the Superior Court of San Bernardino County, who will discuss his court's urgent need for new judgeships and improved court facilities and how these deficiencies impede access to justice.
- **Judge William Murray, Jr.**, of the Superior Court of San Joaquin County, who helped establish the Court and Community Leadership Academy in San Joaquin. He will suggest ways the courts can increase the public's knowledge about their rights and how to effectively use the courts.

The entire hearing will be audiocast live at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc. The final agenda will be distributed tomorrow and will be posted to the California Courts Web site at the link above.

The Judicial Council also will hold a public meeting on Friday, April 21, 2006, at the same location. The agenda for that meeting is available at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/age042106.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.

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