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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Chief Justice to Continue Important Work of Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care**

### *Action Aimed At Ensuring Implementation of Sweeping Reforms*

San Francisco—Chief Justice Ronald M. George announced today that he is extending the work of the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care to help ensure implementation of the commission's sweeping recommendations for reform of the state's juvenile dependency courts and foster care system. The Chief Justice indicated that he is taking this step because the stakes are so high for children and youth who have suffered abuse and neglect.

“Despite the serious fiscal constraints currently facing our state, we cannot let down California's most vulnerable children and families,” declared Chief Justice George. “Because of anticipated budget cuts, these families stand to suffer even more challenges than usual.

Implementation of the commission's recommendations will help ensure that children in the foster care system have a brighter future and a good chance to become successful citizens. We must honor our obligation to these children.”

The Chief Justice made his remarks at the commission's meeting today in San Francisco, which included presentations by newly-formed local foster care commissions that are working to implement commission recommendations at the county level. Formation of local commissions, co-chaired by judges and heads of county child welfare agencies, is one of the Blue Ribbon Commission's key recommendations.

The Chief Justice appointed the statewide commission in March 2006 and tasked it with identifying ways in which courts and their agency partners can improve outcomes related to safety, permanency, well-being and

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fairness for foster children and their families. The commission is the first of its kind to focus on the role of the courts and its responsibility for foster children in California.

By unanimous vote in August 2008, the Judicial Council accepted the commission's 79 recommendations, urging immediate action on 26 of the recommendations that were in the sole purview of the judicial branch to implement. The Judicial Council is the policymaking body for the state's judiciary, the largest court system in the nation.

In addition to expanding the charge of the commission, Chief Justice George announced that California Supreme Court Justice Carlos R. Moreno, will continue to chair the commission and that the terms of members have been extended to June 30, 2012. The original terms were set to expire on June 30, 2009.

The commission's revised duties include the following:

- Under the direction of the Judicial Council, implement as appropriate the recommendations of the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care accepted by the Judicial Council on August 15, 2008;
- Select and refer recommendations, as appropriate, to a Judicial Council advisory committee, a division of the Administrative Office of the Courts, or another entity for implementation, including for review and preparation of proposed legislation, rules, forms, or educational materials to be considered through the normal judicial branch processes;
- Provide support and assistance to county level local foster care commissions as they work to implement commission recommendations;
- Provide support and assistance to non-court partnering agencies to implement commission recommendations;
- Study the need for additional resources that local courts may require to implement the recommendations; and
- Report progress to the Judicial Council by June 2010.

"Ours has been an unprecedented effort to focus attention on the central role that the courts play in foster care," said Justice Moreno. "We have an absolute obligation to do right by the children and families who come into our court rooms. With implementation of these recommendations, we will change the way that juvenile dependency courts do business, and we will see courts and their partnering agencies more effectively collaborate to meet the needs of foster children and their families."

The commission's recommendations focus on both preventing the need for foster care as well as improving the system itself. Nearly half of California's 75,000 foster children remain in care for two or more years, 17 percent of them for more than three years. Moreno characterized these children as "caught in a foster care limbo," noting research that shows

that those who grow up in foster care face an increased risk of unemployment, homelessness, mental illness and involvement with the criminal justice system.

The commission's membership roster is attached. More information on the commission and its final report and action plan is available online at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/blueribbon>.

*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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**California Blue Ribbon Commission**  
**on Children in Foster Care**

As of June 30, 2009  
(Expires June 30, 2012)

**Hon. Carlos R. Moreno, Chair**  
Associate Justice  
Supreme Court of California

**Mr. Curtis L. Child**  
Director  
Office of Governmental Affairs  
Administrative Office of the Courts

**Ms. Robin Allen**  
Executive Director  
California CASA

**Ms. Miryam J. Choca**  
Director  
California Strategic Consultation  
Casey Family Programs

**Hon. Michael D. Antonovich**  
Member, Los Angeles County  
Board of Supervisors  
Fifth Supervisorial District

**Mr. Joseph W. Cotchett**  
Attorney  
Law Offices of Cotchett, Pitre, Simon &  
McCarthy

**Hon. Lucy Armendariz**  
Judge  
State Bar of California

**Mr. Michael S. Cunningham**  
Chief Deputy Director  
Program Services Division  
Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs

**Ms. Mary L. Ault**  
Deputy Director  
Riverside County Department of Public  
Social Services  
Child Protective Services

**Hon. Kathryn Doi Todd**  
Associate Justice of the Court of Appeal  
Second Appellate District, Division Two

**Hon. Karen Bass**  
Assembly Speaker  
California State Assembly

**Jill Duerr Berrick, Ph.D.**  
Professor, School of Social Welfare and  
Co-Director, Center for Child and Youth  
Policy  
University of California at Berkeley

**Hon. Richard C. Blake**  
Chief Judge  
Hoopa Valley Tribal Court

**Hon. Leonard P. Edwards (Ret.)**  
Judge-in-Residence  
Center for Families, Children & the Courts  
Administrative Office of the Courts

**Mr. Lawrence B. Bolton**  
Deputy Director/Chief Counsel  
California Department of Social Services

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(Expires June 30, 2012)

**Mr. Raul A. Escatel**  
Tax Counsel  
California Franchise Tax Board

**Ms. Amy Lemley**  
Policy Director  
John Burton Foundation

**Ms. Deborah Escobedo**  
Staff Attorney  
Youth Law Center

**Mr. Will Lightbourne**  
Director  
Santa Clara County Social Services Agency

**Hon. Terry B. Friedman**  
Judge  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Los Angeles

**Mr. Bill Maze**  
Former Member, California State Assembly  
34th Assembly District

**Mr. Robert E. Friend**  
Director  
California Permanency for Youth Project

**Ms. Donna C. Myrow**  
Executive Director  
L.A. Youth

**Hon. Richard D. Huffman**  
Associate Justice  
Court of Appeal  
Fourth Appellate District, Division One

**Hon. Michael Nash**  
Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Los Angeles

**Hon. Susan D. Huguenor**  
Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court  
Superior Court of California,  
County of San Diego

**Mr. David Neilsen**  
Deputy Director  
Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs

**Ms. Teri Kook**  
Director of Child Welfare  
The Stuart Foundation

**Ms. Diane Nunn**  
Division Director  
Center for Families, Children & the Courts  
Administrative Office of the Courts

**Ms. Miriam Krinsky**  
Lecturer  
UCLA School of Public Affairs

**Mr. John O'Toole**  
Executive Director  
National Center for Youth Law

**California Blue Ribbon Commission**  
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As of June 30, 2009  
(Expires June 30, 2012)

**Mr. Derek Peake**  
Partner  
Costly Grace

**Hon. Dean T. Stout**  
Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California,  
County of Inyo

**Mr. Jonathan Pearson**  
Student/Former Foster Youth

**Mr. John Wagner**  
Director  
California Department of Social Services

**Ms. Linda Penner**  
Chief Probation Officer  
Fresno County Probation Department

**Ms. Jacqueline Wong**  
Consultant  
Foster Youth Services Program  
California Department of Education  
Counseling, Student Support & Service  
Learning Office

**Mr. Anthony Pico**  
Legislative Assistant  
Office of Assembly Member  
Fiona Ma

**Ms. Patricia S. Ploehn**  
LCSW, Director  
Los Angeles County  
Department of Children and Family Services

**EX OFFICIO**

**Hon. John Burton**  
Former President pro Tempore of the  
California State Senate  
John Burton Foundation for  
Children Without Homes

**Maria D. Robles, R.N.**

**Mr. Alan Slater**  
Special Consultant  
Southern Regional Office  
Administrative Office of the Courts

**Hon. Darrell S. Steinberg**  
President pro Tempore  
California State Senate  
Sixth Senate District

**California Blue Ribbon Commission**  
**on Children in Foster Care**

As of June 30, 2009  
(Expires June 30, 2012)

**AOC STAFF TO THE COMMISSION**

**Mr. Christopher Wu**

Executive Director

California Blue Ribbon Commission on  
Children in Foster Care

Center for Families, Children & the Courts

Administrative Office of the Courts

**Ms.Carolynn C. Bernabe**

Staff Analyst

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**Ms. Chris Cleary**

Attorney

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