



# NEWS RELEASE

Release Number: 55

Release Date: October 29, 2010

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF  
CALIFORNIA  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
OF THE COURTS  
Public Information Office  
455 Golden Gate Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688  
[www.courtinfo.ca.gov](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov)

415-865-7740

Lynn Holton  
Public Information Officer

## Judicial Council Takes Action to Restore Funding for Trial Court Operations

San Francisco—To safeguard trial court operations in fiscal year 2010–2011, the Judicial Council of California today allocated \$170 million from state funds and \$45.4 million in new and increased fee revenues to ensure courts stay open by offsetting the impact of budget reductions. These actions result in an important restoration of funding first reduced last year, though much of the budget relief is one-time or limited term.

“Today’s funding allocations represent the successful culmination of the combined efforts of judicial branch and local court leaders, key legislative leaders—such as Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, Assembly Speaker John Pérez, and Assemblyman Mike Feuer—critical support from local and state bar groups, court employee labor organizations, sheriffs, and other judicial branch stakeholders,” said Chief Justice Ronald M. George, Chair of the Judicial Council, the administrative policymaking body of the California courts.

“This year’s judicial branch budget improves access to justice by ensuring that our courts can stay open for business every working day of the year,” the Chief Justice noted.

In other budget actions, the council allocated much-needed funding for court security and court-appointed counsel in dependency cases. These programs also face funding challenges in the future. Today’s meeting was audiocast live and the meeting reports are posted on the California Courts website at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/age20101029.pdf](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/age20101029.pdf).

### OTHER ACTIONS

At the public business meeting, the council also took the following actions.

**Court Facilities:** Approved a prioritized list of facility modifications ranked according to their criticality and necessity, as part of the council’s initiative to provide safe and secure courthouses for Californians. The council also approved a budget of \$50 million for statewide court facility modifications and planning in fiscal year 2010–2011. This funding has already been approved by the state Legislature for court facility modifications and the rankings prioritize hundreds of facility modifications needed throughout the state.

**Financial Accountability and Efficiency:** Accepted the final audit report of the Superior Court of Marin County: *Investigative Report: Destruction of Court Mediator Working Files*. The audit found that mediator working files, including handwritten notes, are not considered “court records” according to statute and the California Rules of Court and therefore are not subject to court record retention requirements. The final audit report will be posted to the California Courts website as part of the council’s new process to provide more transparency to the court auditing process. The audit recommendation was part of the first report by the Advisory Committee on Financial Accountability and Efficiency for the Judicial Branch, appointed last June by Chief Justice George.

**Employee Compensation:** Heard a status report by the Advisory Committee on Financial Accountability and Efficiency for the Judicial Branch, which includes a recommendation that the Chief Justice approve a 3.5 percent merit salary adjustment for all eligible employees of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The step increase would be a reinstatement of an increase that was suspended last fiscal year as a result of the State Budget crisis. In making its recommendation, the committee noted that appellate courts, trial courts, and the AOC have all implemented measures to reduce employee compensation costs during the last three fiscal years, including hiring freezes, layoffs, reduction/elimination of cost-of-living increases, and step increases.

**New Court Rules, Forms:** Approved 38 reports recommending new and amended court rules, forms, and standards governing state court practice and procedure as part of its consent agenda. The revisions were approved in various areas of the law, including appellate procedure, civil and small claims, criminal law, court technology, family and juvenile law, judicial administration, probate law, and criminal jury instructions.

**Uniform Bail and Penalty Schedules:** Approved revisions to the Uniform Bail and Penalty Schedules. The proposed revisions bring the schedules into conformance with recent legislation that increases the court security fee from \$30 per conviction to \$40 per conviction in criminal cases, including traffic infraction cases.

**Commendation for State Bar Executive Director:** Approved a declaration commending State Bar Executive Director Judy Johnson for her leadership of the State Bar and for her many contributions to the state justice system over the past 23 years. For the past 10 years, Ms. Johnson has served as executive director of the State Bar.

**Adoption Month:** Approved a recommendation that the Judicial Council adopt a resolution proclaiming November to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month. The resolution encourages courts and local communities to take special measures to address the issues of adoption and permanency in their counties. Annual recognition of November as Court Adoption and Permanency Month reinforces the Judicial Council's commitment to finding permanent homes for children.

-#-

*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 ensures leadership and excellence in court administration.*