



# NEWS RELEASE

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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 to Seek Funding To Continue Access to Court Services**

### *Funding Needed for Trial Court Security, Dependency Counsel, and Court Interpreters*

San Francisco—At a public meeting today, the Judicial Council adopted legislative priorities for 2011 to help ensure that Californians continue to have access to justice and critical court services. Among other items, the council voted to advocate for these goals:

- Secure sufficient funding to avoid court closures, reduced hours, and staff layoffs without deferring or delaying long-term branch infrastructure projects;
- Secure funding for three longtime council priorities—counsel in juvenile dependency cases, probate conservatorship programs, and court interpreters;
- Extend the court security fee increases recently adopted by the Legislature to prevent further reductions in the court security budget, which has been historically underfunded. The council also will seek greater flexibility to manage growth in trial court security costs, and;
- Sponsor legislation to create a third set of 50 new judgeships to be allocated according to the most recent judgeship needs study and secure funding for the second set of 50 judgeships authorized in 2007 but not yet funded. California courts urgently need new judgeships. According to the judgeship needs study, state courts have a shortage of 330 judges or 14 percent.

Chaired by Chief Justice Ronald M. George, the council is the administrative policymaking body of the California courts. The meeting was audiocast live and the meeting materials are posted at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/age20101214.pdf>.

Today's business meeting is the last to be chaired by Chief Justice George before he retires from his position on January 2, 2011, after 45 years in public service and 38 years on the bench.

“When I leave my position as Chief Justice of California, I know what I will miss the most—working with all of you on the Judicial Council and with my colleagues on the Supreme Court,” Chief Justice George stated. “Serving with you on the council has been worthwhile, enjoyable, and memorable. I am optimistic about the future of our courts under your leadership and under our new Chief Justice, Tani Cantil-Sakauye. I thank you all for your service to the council, to the courts, and to the people of California.”

In other actions, the council:

**Allocation of Special Funds:** Approved allocations of \$198.6 million in statewide special funds for projects and programs that support the trial courts, including statewide court technology programs and projects, such as the California Court Case Management System; human resources and accounting services; judicial and court staff education and training; complex civil litigation departments; alternative dispute resolution; self-help centers; and other programs to improve court services for the public. The funds were allocated from the Trial Court Improvement Fund, the Judicial Administration Efficiency and Modernization Fund, and the Trial Court Trust Fund, in accordance with provisions of the state Government Code.

**Local Fiscal Management of Two Trial Courts:** Reinstated local responsibility for fiscal management of the Superior Courts of Placer and Glenn Counties. Last year, the council directed the Administrative Director of the Courts to provide oversight for the fiscal operations of those courts under Government Code section 77206.1. Both courts have significantly improved their fiscal condition since that time, established internal fiscal oversight controls, implemented appropriate financial and operating policies and procedures, stabilized revenue and expenditure streams, and established sufficient operating and emergency reserves.

**Commission for Impartial Courts:** Endorsed two recommendations to improve the judicial appointment process that were proposed by the Implementation Committee of the Commission for Impartial Courts. Both recommendations will be referred to the State Bar of California for further action. The Implementation Committee also provided an update on the first year of implementation efforts, following submission of its final report in 2009.

**Equal Access Fund:** Approved the distribution of \$2 million in partnership grants for fiscal year 2010–2011 for the Equal Access Fund. The State Bar Legal Services Trust Fund

Commission submitted a report that recommended the distribution of those funds according to the statutory formula set out in the State Budget.

**Family Law:** Heard an interim progress report from the Elkins Family Law Implementation Task Force, presented by Justice Laurie D. Zelon, of the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Seven (Los Angeles). Appointed by Chief Justice George in May 2008, the task force conducted a comprehensive review of family law proceedings and made recommendations to the Judicial Council to increase access to justice for all family law litigants, including self-represented litigants; ensure fairness and due process; and provide for more effective and consistent family law rules, policies, and procedures.

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*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.*