



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Judicial Council Takes Action to Support Key Programs in State Courts**

### *Council Also Approves New Ethics Code for Court Employees at Public Meeting in San Francisco*

San Francisco—To support essential services and programs in the state courts, the Judicial Council of California has approved \$232.4 million in allocations from special funds designated to support the trial courts – the Trial Court Modernization Fund, the Judicial Administration Efficiency and Modernization Fund, and the Trial Court Trust Fund.

Many of the funding allocations, particularly in the area of technology, are lower than allocations in past years and are below previously planned amounts. However, the council's actions maintain support for essential programs, projects, and services in the current fiscal year.

Funding approved at the meeting will support various statewide administrative and technology infrastructure projects, as well as ongoing programs and services in areas including financial and human resources, judicial education, complex litigation, alternative dispute resolution, self-help, audits, and other court programs and services that benefit the public.

The council also allocated \$7.4 million to courts for replacing personal computers and printers, but authorized courts to redirect these funds as necessary to address other operational needs.

The council took the action at a public business meeting on Friday. Chaired by Chief Justice Ronald M. George, the council is the administrative policymaking body of the California courts. Meeting materials are available at

<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/age102309.pdf> .

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## OTHER ACTIONS

The 28-member council also approved 43 reports on its consent agenda that proposed new and revised rules of court, court forms, and standards of judicial administration in various areas of law. In other matters, the council took these actions:

**Ethics Code for Court Employees:** Approved amendments to the *Code of Ethics for the Court Employees of California*, last updated in 1994. The changes reflect updated and comprehensive tenets and guidelines that support the highest standards of professional integrity and ethical conduct by all court employees. The changes include a new tenet and guideline that address the importance of good stewardship of court public resources, and another tenet that expands the guidance to avoid all categories of harassment, including sexual harassment.

**Postemployment Benefits in Trial Courts:** Approved a policy directive and guidelines for trial courts on prefunding postemployment benefits and establishing irrevocable trusts. The policy establishes a two-year moratorium on authorizing the prefunding of postemployment benefits, due the difficult financial situation facing the state.

**Adoption and Permanency Month:** For the 11th year in a row, the council proclaimed November as Court Adoption and Permanency Month to coincide with National Adoption Month. The goal is to encourage courts and local communities to take special measures to address adoption and permanency in their counties. Approximately 71,000 children in California live apart from their families in child welfare-supervised out-of-home care.

**Court Awards:** Recognized eight court programs as recipients of the 2008–2009 Kleps Awards, which honor courts for innovative programs benefiting the public. Court of Appeal Justice Ronald B. Robie, chair of the council's Kleps Award Committee, profiled the winning court programs, which were announced earlier this year ([www.courtinfo.ca.gov/presscenter/newsreleases/NR21-09.PDF](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/presscenter/newsreleases/NR21-09.PDF)).

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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.*