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## **Three Courthouse Projects Receive Funding Authorization**

San Francisco—Three courthouse projects to be financed by Senate Bill 1407 received initial funding authorization today by the State Public Works Board (SPWB). This approval marks the official start of these projects. The projects include:

- New Santa Barbara Criminal Courthouse: 8 courtrooms
- Fresno County Courthouse Renovation: 25 courtrooms
- Willows Historic Courthouse Renovation and Expansion: 3 courtrooms

The California Legislature enacted SB 1407 to provide up to \$5 billion in funding for critically needed new and renovated court facilities using court user fees rather than the state's General Fund. These three projects were all ranked as "immediate need" or "critical need," making them among the highest priority capital-outlay projects for California's judicial branch. According to Chief Justice Ronald M. George, "Strengthening the physical foundation of our judicial system is more than a metaphor. Courthouses are as vital a part of California's infrastructure as bridges, highways, and water systems. It is time to adequately fund this fundamental component of the infrastructure of our democracy. Public safety and the interests of 38 million Californians require it."

To initiate each project, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) must seek funding authorization from the Joint Legislative Budget Committee of the State Legislature as well as the SPWB. This first authorization enables the AOC to proceed with site selection/acquisition, environmental review, and preliminary plans, the initial step in architectural design. Courthouse construction projects typically take approximately five years from start to finish.

The AOC officially began the first 15 projects funded by SB 1407 in late July 2009. Another 11 projects were authorized by December 2009. The AOC plans to request funding authorizations for all remaining SB 1407 projects by summer 2010. These projects will offer valuable economic stimulus in local communities—the three projects just approved are estimated to create more than 6,000 direct and indirect jobs as they progress through design, construction, and completion. Expediting these projects enables the AOC to take advantage of a unique window of opportunity—afforded by the current recession—for reduced pricing on land, design, and construction.

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