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## Three Courthouse Projects Receive Funding Authorization

SAN FRANCISCO—Plans for a new courthouse and revised plans for two courthouse projects to be financed by Senate Bill 1407 received funding authorization today by the State Public Works Board (SPWB). The projects include:

- **Sacramento Criminal Courthouse:** 44 courtrooms, reauthorization of a previously funded project, revised to improve access and efficiency at lower cost
- **Santa Clara Family Justice Center:** 20 courtrooms, reauthorization of a previously funded project, revised to fund a greater proportion of the project through SB 1407
- **Riverside-Hemet Courthouse:** new 9-courtroom courthouse

For the Sacramento Criminal Courthouse, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), working with the Superior Court of Sacramento County, revised the plans and budget to improve access to justice as well as operational efficiency in both the new criminal courthouse and the Gordon D. Schaber Courthouse, while lowering the project's overall cost. The revised plan increases the number of courtrooms in the new criminal courthouse from 35 to 44, adds adequate space for necessary holding cells, shifts administrative space to the Schaber Courthouse from the new courthouse, and includes a minor renovation to the Schaber building. By taking advantage of the current window of opportunity afforded by the recession, the AOC was able to propose these changes while lowering the overall project estimate to \$439.1 million.

For the Santa Clara Family Justice Center, the SPWB authorized a new funding plan, through which the majority of the project's estimated \$241 million budget will be funded by SB 1407. The 20-courtroom Family Justice Center will replace six leased facilities and consolidate all family-related services, including family court, juvenile dependency, and drug court, into a single facility.

In Hemet, the proposed project would improve access to justice and security by replacing the significantly overcrowded, physically deficient Hemet Courthouse with a modern, secure facility for all case types, including criminal cases, which are currently handled in Murrieta or even farther away. It would also provide space for four new judgeships in this historically fast-growing area.

The California Legislature enacted SB 1407 to provide up to \$5 billion in funding for 41 critically needed new and renovated court facilities using court user fees rather than the state's General Fund. These three projects were 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, which is the initial step in architectural design. Courthouse construction projects typically take approximately five years from start to finish.

To date, 37 SB 1407 projects have been authorized this fiscal year, including today’s newly approved projects. The AOC plans to request funding authorizations for the remaining SB 1407 projects next month. These projects will offer valuable economic stimulus in local communities as they proceed through design and construction. The AOC is seeking to expedite these projects to take advantage of the current economy’s reduced pricing on land, design, and construction.

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