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Celebrate Law Week and AmeriCorps Week With California JusticeCorps, May 2–7

Everyone Should Be Heard: Judicial Branch and Libraries Serve Local Communities

SAN FRANCISCO—Public libraries are partnering with the superior courts’ self-help centers, local bar associations, local law libraries, and the Administrative Office of the Courts this year to celebrate Law Week and AmeriCorps Week with events in select libraries in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara from May 2 to 7. The week’s theme is “Everyone Should Be Heard.” The public is invited to attend.

Law Week honors the role of law in our nation; AmeriCorps Week recognizes AmeriCorps’ impact in communities across the country and acknowledges the contributions of its volunteers and community partners. This year’s theme, “Everyone Should Be Heard,” honors one of the fundamental principles of American law—defending the rights of the accused and everyone getting a chance to tell someone their side of the story.

Based on a successful partnership piloted in Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito and Monterey Counties, the Administrative Office of the Courts created the California Court and Library Partnership that provides training and resources to public libraries. Over a million people a day visit California’s public libraries and frequently turn to them for legal information. The combined Law Week and AmeriCorps Week events celebrate such efforts of community service and help increase understanding of our court system while improving access to justice for all Californians.

The JusticeCorps program, which is part of AmeriCorps, provides Californians with help navigating the court system by recruiting, training, and inspiring college students to serve as assistants in California’s court-based legal access self-help centers. JusticeCorps members help self-represented litigants in matters involving eviction, divorce, child custody, domestic violence, and small claims.

One of the most pressing issues faced by courts around the country today is providing equal access to justice. Each year more than 4.3 million California court users are self-represented. Most go to court without an attorney because they cannot afford to hire one. There are 8,361 self-represented litigants for every 1 legal aid lawyer. In addition:

- Only one-third of the legal services needs of low-income Californians are met.
- Courts report that 80 percent of parties involved in family law disputes and 90 percent of parties in landlord/tenant cases represent themselves.

(more)

In the 2010– 2011 fiscal year, 300 JusticeCorps volunteers will provide over 100,000 hours of service to the public. Since the program began in 2004, JusticeCorps members have assisted 194,600 self-represented litigants in 24 different languages, filed more than 130,300 legal documents, and provided over 122,500 referrals to additional services.

More about JusticeCorps is on the California Courts website at www.courts.ca.gov/programs-justicecorps.htm.

Events and services will vary by location. Please check the California Courts website for updates. The master calendar of events is at www.courts.ca.gov/xbcr/cc/Master_Calendar_of_All_Events_4-19.pdf.

More about the California Court and Library Partnership at www.calegaladvocates.org/libraries

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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.