



California Asian-Pacific American Judges Association

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July 21, 2012

Attn: Invitations to Comment
Administrative Office of the Courts

RE: Item SP 12-05
Strategic Evaluation Committee Report
Comments from California Asian-Pacific American Judges Association (CAAJA)

Dear Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye:

The California Asian-Pacific American Judges Association (CAAJA) submits these comments in response to the Strategic Evaluation Committee (SEC) Report on the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

The goals of CAAJA include promoting diversity in the bar and the judiciary, improving the administration of justice, and ensuring access and fairness for all who use the courts, including those from diverse backgrounds and communities.

As the Judicial Council determines what needs to be restructured at the AOC, we urge the Council to consider the benefits of the AOC's ongoing efforts to improve access to justice for all court users and promote diversity in the legal profession and in the judiciary.

The AOC's court interpreters program provides a vital service. Through this program the AOC manages the recruitment, orientation, testing, and certification of court interpreters, in accordance with Government Code Sections 68560-68566. The AOC also oversees the mandatory training for newly qualified interpreters and manages the continuing education and professional development requirements for 1,792 certified and registered interpreters. The AOC has also worked through the Center for Families and Children in the Courts to advance language access in the California Courts.

As of 2010, California had roughly 6.9 million residents with limited English proficiency, the highest number of such residents in any state. Increases in court interpreter service days for spoken languages suggest a sizeable and growing demand for these services in California courts. Between 2004 and 2008, the state's courts provided more than 1 million days of spoken language interpretative services in 147 languages, and the total number of service days for mandated proceedings increased 14 percent during that period.

Given the tremendous demand for interpreter services, and particularly considering the reliance upon these services by a vulnerable section of the population who should not be effectively shut off from the legal system, CAAJA requests that the Judicial Council continue to place a high priority upon the preservation of the AOC's interpreter services.

We would also like to stress the AOC's function in the promotion of diversity in the profession and in the judiciary. We encourage the Judicial Council to support the allocation of resources and qualified staff to continue diversity programs and initiatives. If the bench and bar are to maintain the public's trust and confidence in the fairness of our judicial system, we must do all we can to harness the best talent in a diverse population and to channel that talent into the profession.

CAAJA appreciates that in distressed economic times the Judicial Council confronts unprecedented challenges and difficult decisions. We hope that the Judicial Council will continue to promote the judicial branch's collective efforts to increase diversity in the bar and the judiciary, improve the administration of justice, and ensure access and fairness for all who use the courts.

Sincerely,

Helena R. Gweon
President
California Asian-Pacific American Judges Association