

From: Judge Stuebbe, Jon
To: Invitations
Subject: Adoption of SEC Recommendations
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To the Chief Justice and the Judicial Council of the State of California,

I am an active judge of the California Superior Court with over 19 years of service on the bench. I strongly urge the immediate adoption and implementation of all of the recommendations of the SEC Committee, coupled with a complete reversal of the creeping authoritarianism in the AOC which I have witnessed over the last twelve to fourteen years. It has been disheartening to see the growth of mindless bureaucracy resulting from a plan of centralization of power in the past leadership. I had hoped the arrival of the new Chief Justice would be an opportunity to do a complete reevaluation of how the California Court system operates. I have been sorely disappointed.

A golden opportunity has been missed to reverse the implied tone in the state courts that the local Superior Courts are only slightly better than incompetent children who need to be guided by their betters. The lost opportunity has resulted in disgruntlement and opposition on the part of a large number of judges. So much so that over 400 of them have formed a new organization for the sole purpose of restoring the proper balance between the trial courts and the central administration which is to serve them. Even so, the Chief Justice, the Judicial Council, and the AOC refuse to even acknowledge the existence of such a group. No reference is made to its positions or opinions. It is treated as if it doesn't speak to the concerns of nearly a fourth of the state's judges or that steps shouldn't be taken to acknowledge those concerns. What kind of an organization can long remain legitimate when it operates that way?

It at first appeared that the appointment of the SEC could have been a step in the right direction and that its recommendations would be adopted. However, in the months between its creation and the release of its report, the actions of the Court's central administration to forge ahead with control, to grudgingly provide information to the SEC, or even to engage in a rear-guard campaign of delay and misinformation has dashed that hope. That same process has created an atmosphere of distrust and disbelief in the State Legislature with the budget results we have now all seen. Speaking with one voice is a bad idea if it is disbelieved.

The Chief Justice needs to immediately reverse her management style to one of substantive engagement. She needs to democratize the Judicial Council and make it a representative body not under her control. She needs to stop reacting to developments in the governance of the Court as if they were personal affronts or challenges to her authority. She needs to stop reassuring the masses in the AOC that everything will be alright if they can just hunker down and weather the storm swirling about them while ignoring the 1700 trial court judges in the state who are also her colleagues.

Fortunately, we have not all spoken with one voice. The separate voice of those who know that the future of the California Courts does not lie in a bureaucracy of such a stifling mass was heard in Sacramento and will continue to be heard there. The SEC recommendations are reasonable and

responsible steps toward a leaner, more responsive court system that relies on consensus and the intelligence of all its members. I urge you to adopt and implement them – with enthusiasm, in total and as soon as possible.

Jon Stuebbe
Judge, Kern County Superior Court