



Judicial Council of California

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INVITATION TO COMMENT

SP23-05

Title

Revised *Courthouse Naming Policy*

Proposed Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes

None

Proposed by

Court Facilities Advisory Committee
Hon. Brad R. Hill, Chair
Hon. Patricia M. Lucas (Ret.), Vice-Chair
Hon. Keith D. Davis (Ret.), Chair of the
Subcommittee on Courthouse Names

Action Requested

Review and submit comments by
June 26, 2023, for CFAC review

Contact

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Summary and Committee Action

The Judicial Council, with recommendation from its Court Facilities Advisory Committee's (CFAC) Subcommittee on Courthouse Names, names courthouses based on standards to provide consistency in identifying courthouses in California. Changes over time necessitate an update to the policy since it was adopted by the Judicial Council in 2009 and last revised in 2014.

Proposed edits to the current policy are reflected in the attached redline version and were approved for public comment by the CFAC's Subcommittee on Courthouse Names at its public meeting on June 12, 2023. For reference, those meeting materials, including presentation slides, are available at www.courts.ca.gov/documents/cfac-20230612-cn-materials.pdf.

The CFAC will meet next on June 27, 2023, to review public comments received before making a final recommendation to the Judicial Council.

This proposal has not been approved by the Judicial Council and is not intended to represent the views of the council, its Rules Committee, or its Legislation Committee. It is circulated for comment purposes only.

I. Purpose of the Policy

The Judicial Council of California (Judicial Council) is responsible for California's courthouses under the Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002 and related legislation, which also includes responsibility for construction of new courthouses and renovation of existing courthouses. It is the policy of the Judicial Council, acting through the Court Facilities Advisory Committee, Subcommittee on Courthouse Names, through its directives to ~~the Judicial Council staff, of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC),~~ to name courthouses based on standards. This will provide consistency in identifying courthouses in California.

The naming of courthouses will follow the standards set forth in this policy in naming new courthouses, and in naming existing courthouses—including court facilities that are renovated.

II. Application of Courthouse Naming Standards

The Judicial Council's naming standards will be applied to newly constructed courthouses and renovated courthouses which the Judicial Council has financed—in whole or in part—and to existing courthouses, where the judicial branch is the facility owner or majority tenant.

III. Names for Trial and Appellate Courthouses

A. Definitions

Court facility refers to any building that the local court occupies to provide its main services, its branch services, or other services and operations. As used in this policy, the word *courthouse* is considered interchangeable with this term.

Court Facilities Advisory Committee (CFAC) is an advisory body to the Judicial Council on all facilities-related matters. The members of this advisory committee are appointed by the Chief Justice of California. The CFAC, ~~formerly the Court Facilities Working Group,~~ is charged with providing ongoing oversight of the Judicial Branch program that manages new construction and renovations for the superior courts and Courts of Appeal throughout the state. It oversees the work of the Judicial Council staff AOC in its management of court facilities statewide and in its effort to implement the judicial branch's capital improvement program.

Subcommittee on Courthouse Names (the subcommittee) is the subcommittee of the CFAC charged with responsibility to review and consider options in naming specific new and existing courthouses. The chair of the Subcommittee on Courthouse Names is appointed by the chair of the CFAC. The members of the subcommittee are appointed by the subcommittee chair. ~~Its membership, including the appointed chair, will comprise the following: five superior court judges, an appellate court justice, two members of the State Bar of California, and one professional from the design, construction or real estate industry.~~ The subcommittee is responsible for recommending to the CFAC names for courthouses and in doing so may consider comments from members of CFAC, or refer requests for naming to the Judicial Council where appropriate. The subcommittee's operating protocols, including the term of each member, will be established by the CFAC.

Case type can include but is not limited to the following caseload identifiers: family law, juvenile, criminal, civil, traffic, probate, small claims, mental health, and drug.

Location of a court facility refers to the building’s physical location in either an incorporated (i.e., town or city) or unincorporated (i.e., county or region) geographical area.

B. Naming Standards for Trial and Appellate Courthouses

1. Courthouses will be named based on one of the following two categories:
 - a. Location and case type, which is the category most commonly used; or
 - b. ~~Deceased~~-A person, which is a rarely used category.

A courthouse name will not include the name of any business entity, institution, foundation, or other organization, whether for profit or not for profit.

2. An explanation of each category follows. For all name categories, the courthouse name must include “Superior Court” or “Court of Appeal” *and* “California.” In each case, the building name may include the term “Courthouse,” “Justice Center,” or “Hall of Justice.”

- a. Naming Preference 1: Location and Case Type (Most Commonly Used). It is the preference of the Judicial Council to name courthouses after their location and, if applicable, case type. This convention supports the Judicial Council’s goal of enhancing access to justice because naming courthouses after the location and case type provides users with key information about where the courthouse is located and the type of proceedings conducted within the courthouse.

Examples of courthouse names under the preferred naming standard for trial courts are as follows:

Format Examples	Courthouses	Justice Centers	Halls of Justice
Example 1	El Centro Family Courthouse Superior Court of California County of Imperial	Selma Regional Justice Center Superior Court of California County of Fresno	East County Hall of Justice Superior Court of California County of Alameda
Example 2	El Centro Family Courthouse Superior Court of California Imperial County	Selma Regional Justice Center Superior Court of California Fresno County	East County Hall of Justice Superior Court of California Alameda County

Examples of courthouse names under the preferred naming standard for appellate courts are as follows:

Format Examples	Appellate Courthouse Names
Example 1	State of California Court of Appeal First Appellate District Courthouse
Example 2	California Court of Appeal Fourth Appellate District Division Three
Example 3	State of California Court of Appeal Fifth Appellate District

b. Naming Preference 2: ~~Deceased~~ A Person (Rarely Used). Naming a courthouse after a ~~deceased~~ person must be carefully considered to protect the integrity and independence of the judicial branch. A courthouse may be named after a ~~deceased~~ person based on upon consideration of all the following criteria:

- i. The person made recognizable, significant contributions to the state or national justice system.
- ii. There exists a rebuttable presumption that, in order to be eligible, ~~the person shall have been deceased a minimum of 10 years.~~ The subcommittee deems that because 10 years is a reasonable period of time ~~to establish the individual's character~~ within which unknown facts would come to light that bear upon the person's character. ~~This 10-year period is consistent with the 10-year practice period requirement for consideration for judgeship in the State of California.[†]~~

The presumption may be overcome in a case of a living person, or a person who has been deceased for fewer than 10 years, where articulable circumstances exist which ensure that the character traits of the person are then fully known (e.g., the person's character and reputation were previously investigated, extensively and repeatedly, in connection with the person's earlier selection or appointment to positions of public service responsibility).

- iii. The person, or the estate of the person, or any otherwise related entity deemed to pose a potential conflict of interest by the subcommittee, does not have any case pending before any court, and no such case is reasonably likely to come before any court, in future litigation.
- iv. The naming does not present a potential conflict of interest as may

[†] Cal. Const., art. VI, § 15. A person is ineligible to be a judge of a court of record unless for 10 years immediately preceding selection, the person has been a member of the State Bar or served as a judge of a court of record in this State.

be viewed by the public, government entities, or private businesses.

- v. Consistency with the California Code of Judicial Ethics.

Examples of ~~deceased~~ persons who meet these criteria may include a former Governor of California, a former Chief Justice of California, a former member of the California or United States Supreme Court, a former appellate court justice, a former trial court judge, a former court executive officer, a former president of a state or local bar association, a trial court judge, an appellate court justice, or a former state or federal legislator; ~~or may include a former Governor of California or a former Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, or a member of the United States Supreme Court. Courthouses may not be named for living persons.~~

C. Process for Naming Courthouses

Courthouses will be named by the following process:

1. Requests for courthouse naming will be submitted to the chair of the subcommittee by the presiding judge or assistant presiding judge, or the court executive officer or the administrative presiding justice, or the clerk/executive officer of the Court of Appeal, or their designee, of the subject court. Concurrently, the chair of the subcommittee will in turn provide the request(s) to the local court or committee as to process and minimum requirements set forth in this policy.
2. The subcommittee will evaluate each proposed name under the standards set forth in this policy.
3. Upon consideration of any request, the chair of the subcommittee will propose requests for names under section 2(a) preference 1, and all requests under section 2 (b) preference 2, for consideration by the CFAC.
4. Upon consideration, the CFAC shall present a recommendation on the name of a courthouse to the Judicial Council, which presentation will include the subcommittee's recommendation.
5. Where appropriate, the chair of the subcommittee will be delegated by the chair of CFAC to approve standard courthouse names under section 2(a) of this policy, on behalf of the CFAC of the Judicial Council. This approval shall be subject to ratification by the Judicial Council. Requests for those names must have been duly submitted under C.1 of this policy.

D. Designation of Courthouse Names in Building Signage and Plaques

Signage and plaques on buildings shall designate the duly approved names under this policy subject to the following requirements:

1. Standards: All signage and plaques must comply with the requirements of the *California Trial Court Facilities Standards*² and its addenda as pertain to signage, use of seals by courts³ and plaques.
2. Application of courthouse names: Subject to the foregoing, each state ~~trial~~ courthouse shall have reflected in its exterior signage designated under this policy: “Superior Court of California, County of [County name]” and the Great Seal of the State of California.

² Judicial Council’s *California Trial Court Facilities Standards*, 20~~2006~~.

³ Gov. Code §§ 68074, 68076 *et seq.*