

Summary of Article VI Topics Under Discussion

The discussion for the broad group of participating representatives will focus on potential amendments to article VI in 2005 that will protect the neutrality of the judiciary, protect access to justice, and increase stability in the operations of the courts by protecting funding, while providing for appropriate accountability to the public. The council is seeking input for developing final proposals for its consideration and subsequent referral to the Legislature.

Potential amendments to article VI would represent significant advances toward several critical judicial branch goals:

- **Ensuring access to a fair and effective court system**
Potential amendments would provide for stable funding to protect the judicial branch from harmful budget reductions and establish procedures to add new judges on the basis of need.
- **Establishing appropriate judicial branch accountability to the public and to the legislative and executive branches that protects the neutrality of judges and establishes the judiciary as a truly independent, co-equal branch**
Potential amendments would provide the Judicial Council with responsibility for creating policies that promote access to courts, setting goals for the branch, publicly reporting on progress, and providing for independent audits; expand the authority of the Commission on Judicial Performance by increasing discipline options; and clarify the Supreme Court's authority over admission to the State Bar and discipline of the state's lawyers.
- **Protecting the independence and neutrality of the courts by minimizing politicization of the judicial branch.**
Potential amendments would modify the judicial election process and address judicial compensation issues.