



Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts
Office of Communications, 455 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, CA 94102-3688
California Courts Infoline 800-900-5980, www.courts.ca.gov

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: [Teresa Ruano](mailto:Teresa.Ruano@courts.ca.gov), 415-865-7447

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Judicial Council Approves Significant Cost-Cutting in Court Construction

13 Projects to Be Reassessed; 24 Others Have Construction Budgets Cut

SAN FRANCISCO—The Judicial Council today endorsed a cost-cutting direction for court construction statewide, including the reassessment of 13 projects and further construction budget trimming on 24 projects. The council approved recommendations from the [Court Facilities Working Group](#) that are expected to yield significant, long-term savings throughout the \$5 billion program.

“Today council’s action sets firm direction for continuing with much-needed court improvements in today’s demanding fiscal climate,” said Administrative Presiding Justice Brad R. Hill of the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District, who chairs the working group. “We need to ensure we are spending every dollar of the public’s money wisely. At the same time, the council has reaffirmed the responsibility and commitment of the judicial branch to provide equal access to justice in safe and secure courthouses. While we cannot today predict the full outcome of this process, what we do know is that measures approved today will result in significant budget reductions. We believe we will achieve far greater savings as we proceed,” Justice Hill said.

Thirteen projects, with a current combined project cost of \$1.1 billion, will be reassessed for significant savings options, including downsizing square footage, undertaking renovations instead of new construction, evaluating lease options, and using lower-cost construction methods where feasible. The reassessment timeline will vary for each project.

Another 24 projects, worth \$3.2 billion overall, will proceed with mandated construction budget cuts of at least 2 to 10 percent, over and above the 4 percent reduction directed by the council in December 2011. Seven projects have been designated as models for lower-cost construction methods, such as tilt-up construction. [Plan details](#). The council also delegated to the Administrative Office of the Courts the ability to depart from council-approved statewide design standards in order to achieve these new economies, subject to approval of the working group.

(more)

“The standards were designed to produce the best possible buildings, with the best long-term value for money,” said Justice Jeffrey Johnson, Associate Justice of the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District who chairs the subcommittee that developed the recommendations and will oversee work with the affected courts. “This change gives staff the flexibility needed to encourage innovative thinking and cost-conscious approaches. We still expect to build efficient, durable, quality buildings. And they will be significantly less expensive.”

[Senate Bill 1407](#) was enacted in 2008 to authorize up to \$5 billion in funding for new and renovated courthouses using court fees, penalties, and assessments rather than taxpayer revenues from the state’s General Fund. Since 2009, more than \$1.1 billion in funding originally designated for courthouse construction has been borrowed, swept to the state’s General Fund, or redirected to court operations. The 25-member working group was appointed by the Chief Justice in July 2011 to oversee the judicial branch facilities program.

The judicial branch facilities program is responsible for providing local communities in California with safe, secure, accessible courthouses. The infrastructure projects are funded by court users statewide, generate jobs, and contribute to local economies and state tax revenues.

The video shown during today’s Judicial Council meeting highlighting the immediate and critical needs for California courthouse replacement and renovation is now available on the California Courts YouTube channel: <http://youtu.be/h1rPymFWCWU>

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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.