

The Judicial Council met in an all day special session to address a crisis. The future of judicial branch technology has been forced into a crossroads, due to the unprecedented \$653 million budget reduction over the last 4 years.

Hon. Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye, Chief Justice of California *“In this environment, all of the council’s decisions about use of scarce resources of the branch has to be balanced with our number one priority: keeping the courts open and fully operating and ensuring access to justice in California.”*

The question this day was what to do with CCMS, the integrated statewide Court Case Management System that’s been in development for 10 years, and is now ready for deployment to the courts.

Renea Hatcher, AOC Information Services *“It is done, it is complete. So we’re ready.*

Public comment was extended to almost an hour, which included impassioned pleas to pull the plug on CCMS. There was also strong support for CCMS, while acknowledging scarcity of funds.

Niall McCarthy, President, Consumer Attorneys of CA *“There simply is not enough money presently available for a CCMS or other electronic system. We recognize that; but that doesn’t alleviate the need for one.”*

Hon. Ming Chin, California Supreme Court Justice *“We cannot continue to have a courts system that is bogged down in paper.”*

Paul Kiesel, Open Courts Coalition *“We cannot have 58 separate counties develop their own independent software systems that provide technology access.”*

The options council members considered were: to deploy CCMS to 11 courts over the next 10 years; at an estimated cost of \$343 million; to put CCMS temporarily on pause; or to terminate the final iteration of CCMS, called V4. The chair of the CCMS Executive Committee noted that all options would cost dearly – in dollars and cents, and otherwise.

Hon. Terence Bruiniers, CCMS Executive Committee Chair *“The public we serve will pay a very high price if the decision we make today is to retreat from the vision of a modern, coherent and coordinated justice system if we allow parochial self interests to define our goals, and if we surrender our future for temporary expediency.”*

After hours of closely examining the facts, reviewing the independent cost benefit analysis, and debating the options, council members unanimously decided to stop the deployment of CCMS, as currently unaffordable. Courts that are already using interim CCMS products will have continued support.

Judge James Herman told reporters that his CCMS Internal Committee will now examine how acquired knowledge can be leveraged.

Hon. James Herman, Judicial Council CCMS Internal Committee *“To give recommendations to the council on how we can best make use of the technology that we’ve already bought and paid for. What we’re hopeful about coming back with options for use of the technology, options in being able to allow local trial courts to make use of the document management system that’s been developed, the e-filing system that’s been developed, various components of the underlying V4 software on an individual court basis, as opposed to enterprise wide basis.”*

The Chief Justice said terminating deployment of CCMS was an extremely difficult decision for the council.

Hon. Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye, Chief Justice of California *“I think this is an example of how the Judicial Council has to reexamine our old assumptions. And what we lost today is a greater portal of access and transparency for the public and the lawyers and how the judicial branch operates, and for them to have access to justice to their own cases. And it’s regrettable because we have a system that is a victim of the economy.”*

More details on this special meeting are on the judicial council’s website. I’m Leanne Kozak reporting in San Francisco for California Courts News.