



Superior Court of California County of Amador BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

Among our budget priorities are the restoration and enhancement of public access, services, programs, trust and confidence. Another priority is to reinvest in our workforce to improve morale and productivity, hence, a more efficient Court operation. The budget reductions have had a staggering impact on this small rural court, not only affecting case filings but programs that benefit court users as well. If the Court is to increase services back to previously higher and more acceptable levels, we need to advance our technology plan. However, this priority cannot be achieved without funding to upgrade our aging case management system.

Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

Court has all but eliminated child custody evaluations due to litigants' inability to pay the \$1200 evaluation fee. The court cannot afford to absorb the cost of these evaluations.

Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

Reduced a FTE 1.0 Court Reporter to a .6 position.

Counters / Clerks / Telephones

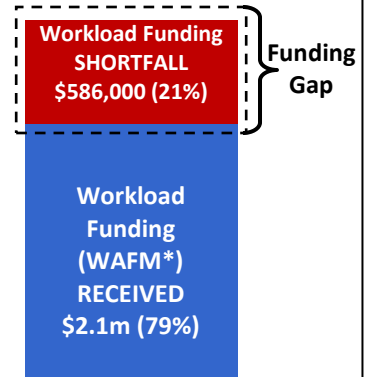
- October 2012, the Clerk's Office and telephone support were available to the public from 9:30am to 3:00pm Monday through Thursday, and from 9:30am to Noon on Fridays.
- November 2014, the Clerk's Office further reduced its hours of operations by closing all day on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month, and a half day Monday through Thursday. During these closure times, staff is working to catch up on backlogs and cover understaffed courtrooms.

Staff Impacts / Furloughs / Layoffs / Unfilled Vacancies

- In FY 2009-10 employees took 18 furlough days; later increased to 20 days with concurrent pay reductions of up to 9.91% of salary.
- In FY 2011-13 employees were furloughed 27 days with concurrent pay reductions of 6.3%.
- FY 2012-13 two voluntary retirements, one (1) position still remains vacant, the other filled at lower level in the Court Clerk series.
- In 2013 one (1) layoff of a full time fiscal management position.
- In 2014 one (1) layoff - HR position. Eliminated the Court Program Manager and Human Resources Analyst position. All HR functions have been absorbed by the Fiscal Unit.
- Employees now pay the full 7% towards their CalPERS retirement; in addition to taking two (2) unpaid holidays.
- PTO accrual rates capped to reduce future unfunded liability.
- COLAs and step Increases remain frozen.

Budget Considerations

***WAFM is the Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology. It describes how much funding courts need based on their workload. In the current year, the workload-based allocation needed in Amador was calculated at \$2.7 million but the court received \$2.1 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



Court Demographics

Population Served	36,151
Square Miles Covered	605
Total Number of Court Facilities	1

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Steve Hermanson
Court Executive Officer	Barbara Cockerham
Executive Office Contact	(209) 257-2681

Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

- Restore public access, trust and confidence.
- Acquire an enhanced case management system where court users can e-file documents and access documents remotely. Implement e-warrant system.
- Generate revenue while continuing to reduce costs, yet maintain efficiency in operation. Increase revenues and additional funding streams to enable the Court to meet the needs of the community, resulting in adequate service levels and broader access.
- Implement technological solutions such as e-filing, document imaging and document storage which in turn provides improved access to court documents, records and information. Goal is to be able to implement technology solutions to raise our service level and quality of service.

The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM)

The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM) calculates the total funding needed for California's 58 trial courts based on case filings, workload and other factors.

To do this, WAFM relies on results from what we call the Resource Assessment Study (RAS) model to estimate total staffing needed using a weighted caseload model. Developed in partnership with national experts, the RAS model is based on a time study of over 5,000 case processing staff in 24 California trial courts. The study established a set of case weights (amount of time in minutes to process a case from initial filing through any post-disposition activity) understanding that certain types of filings take more time and resources to handle than others. The weighted filings are used to estimate total staff needed in each court.

The WAFM model converts the staff need data into dollars, taking into account average salaries, benefits, operating expenses and equipment, and the local cost of labor using the Bureau of Labor Statistics as a benchmark. A "funding floor" is applied to the smallest trial courts because there is a basic operating threshold that must be met in order to provide service to the public. In other words, California's small courts do not have economies of scale, and yet there are basic expenditures that even the smallest courts must make. The result is, for each court, an estimate of the core operations funding required to adequately process its workload. This is known as the court's WAFM share.

Starting in FY 2013-14, a portion of each court's allocation is being recalculated according to its WAFM share. (A court's WAFM share is different from the courts' historical share of the statewide funding. The WAFM calculation tells us what the trial courts need to function based on current filings, whereas the historical share was based on the amount each court received from its county.)

Unfortunately, the total WAFM funding needed for all 58 courts exceeds the funding currently appropriated in the state budget by as much as \$800 million. (This is the WAFM funding gap.) To manage the budget reductions resulting from the implementation of WAFM in the absence of full trial court funding, the Judicial Council approved applying WAFM incrementally to each court's historical share of statewide funding, applying it 100% only to "new" money appropriated in the budget. New money is any undesignated general court operations funding increase above the FY 2012-13 State funding level.

The rules of application adopted by the Judicial Council are as follows:

- Each year beginning in FY 2013-14, and through/including FY 2017-18, incrementally more of the historical (base) funding (using FY 2012-13 as the base) will be subject to WAFM, until 50% of the FY 2012-13 base is distributed according to WAFM;
- All undesignated court operations state funding increases after FY 2012-13 are distributed according to the WAFM shares; and
- For each dollar of new state funding, one dollar of the historical base will be reallocated using WAFM.