

SACRAMENTO

Population: 1,454,406 • Authorized Judges: 63 • Staff: 663 FTE

Civil Filings: 65,695 • Criminal Filings: 192,907 • Family/Juvenile Filings: 18,806 • Other Filings: 4,684

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Sacramento Superior Court is still recovering from budget reductions as a result of the great recession. Despite an overall decrease in new case filings, the court is experiencing workload increases because cases are taking longer to adjudicate due to additional legislatively mandated requirements and increases in the number of self-represented litigants.

Unfunded Legislative Mandates

- **Annually the Legislature enacts new laws requiring additional court resources. For example, new laws require the court to conduct an ability-to-pay determination by written petition or appearance, send reminder notices on all traffic cases, and to establish a mandatory program referral for convictions of driving a boat without a vessel operator card.**

Access to Court Records

- **Due to reductions in staffing and antiquated case management systems, access to court records is hindered. The court has only maintained a skeleton crew that can barely keep up with retrieving files for current trial and hearing functions however, overall purging of files has not been maintained.**

Self-Representation

- **Self-representation has reached a level in our court where it is common for parties in a case to be unrepresented (e.g. 83% in Family Law). This places additional workload on court staff as they have to assist these parties in navigating the court system or have to reprocess documents due to litigants' errors.**

Civil Assessments

- **Revenue for civil assessments has decreased by 57 percent in the past two years. As a result of elimination of failure-to-pay assessments, we expect this revenue to continue to decrease. This will result in a reduction in staff further stressing resources.**

Gordon D Schaber Facility

- **Built in 1965, the court's main facility suffers from a poor seismic rating, absence of fire suppression on upper floors, insufficient holding cells and configuration for in-custody defendants, insufficient facilities for jurors, and mechanical systems that have reached their end of life.**

PRIORITIES FOR REINVESTMENT

Assuming an additional investment in operations funds, we intend to...

- **Staffing – Funding would be used to offset revenue losses experienced by reductions in civil assessments, stabilize staffing levels and provide employee compensation where warranted. This will ensure that the court maintains an adequately sized workforce to ensure access to justice, and allow for the hiring of additional staffing to implement legislative mandates, improve wait times at front counters, and reduce backlogs in areas such as family law mediation, criminal expungements, and civil judgments.**
- **Collaborative Courts – The court would consider enhancing its Mental Health Treatment Court by initiating a tiered approach that would provide a specialized calendar for low risk offenders who currently lack a program. Furthermore, the court would create a new Community Justice Court to hear specialized calendars for mental health diversion, chronic nuisance offenders and serial inebriant offenders.**
- **Access to Justice – Expand access to justice by providing more workshops to assist self-represented litigants in the following areas: Guardianship and Conservatorship, Domestic Violence Restraining Orders, Step-Parent Adoption, Termination of Parental Rights, Landlord Tenant, and Hearing and Trial Preparation.**
- **Records Management – The court is developing a multi-dimensional approach to purge, digitize, and manage files and other media that should reduce and all but eliminate the reliance on paper files and increase efficiency. The court is working to implement modern case management systems in all case types that will assist in moving towards a paperless environment.**