



Superior Court of California County of Siskiyou BUDGET SNAPSHOT



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS
OFFICE OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

January 2014

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2014-15

The Court is challenged to provide access to justice to the more than 44,000 residents of the State's 5th largest and very geographically diverse county. Siskiyou struggles with unemployment rates which have ranged from 16.6% up to 20% during the past 5 years. The county lacks many professional services. The Court must use psychologists located 100 or more miles away for required psychological evaluations. Civil litigants are usually self-represented. Over the past 5 years, the Court has dealt with a dramatic reduction in its budget that has compromised access to justice and resulted in closure of 3 court facilities. The Court intends to utilize technology and seek financial support for its efforts to re-establish adequate access to justice.

Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

Last year, we reduced availability of facilitator and self-help services by 50%; many services are now only available by appointment. We are developing a different methodology of providing these services.

Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

- Reduced court reporter staff from 3 FTE to 2 FTE; this reduction causes delays as the Court must rely on *per diem* court reporters who primarily reside outside of Siskiyou County.
- The Court is on the I-5 corridor with a high volume of traffic cases bringing litigants with diverse language backgrounds, which sometimes requires us to bring interpreters in from around the state. We are looking into the new remote interpreting program for District 3.

Counters / Clerks / Telephones

- Reduced the number of hours of public access for all divisions.
- All windows close at 4pm and during the noon hour, except the Criminal Division, which greatly reduces court users' ability to do business. The Court plans to increase its web presence and explore other technology options to increase access to services.

Closed Courtrooms (3) and Closed Court Facilities (3)

There is a 4,000-foot pass on I-5 periodically closed in winter south of Yreka. With the closure of the Weed facility, a significant portion of the population of Siskiyou County isolated from Court services during inclement weather.

- The Tulelake courtroom closed in FY 11-12 and remains closed; users in Tulelake area must travel 30 minutes to Dorris for limited court services or 2 hours to Yreka for most services.
- The Weed facility closed January 2014; that court served the communities south and southeast to the Shasta County line.
- The Happy Camp court closed January 2014; it served users in Western Siskiyou County from Happy Camp to the Humboldt County line, over 1 hour away.
- All calendars and services from Tulelake were consolidated with the Dorris Branch, where court is now held once a month.
- The Weed and Happy Camp staff, calendars and services were consolidated at the Yreka Courthouse.

Staff Impacts / Furloughs / Layoffs / Unfilled Vacancies

Voluntary separations are occurring. Layoffs are expected this fiscal year due to the funding inequities based on filings experienced by small courts. No cost of living increases were available to court employees in the current year.

Budget Considerations

Budgeted Revenues* FY 2013-2014	\$4,457,096
<u>Total Revenues* FY 2008-2009</u>	<u>\$5,584,074</u>
Five-Year Revenue Reduction	-\$1,126,978
<small>*Excludes Sheriff-Provided Security</small>	
Current Year Unfunded Employee Health Benefits and Retirement Costs	-\$150,840
<u>Share of \$60 million augmentation</u>	<u>\$70,136</u>
Net Augmentation of \$60 million after WAFM Historical Funding Adjustments	\$3,406

Court Demographics

Population Served	44,639
Square Miles Covered	6,347
Total Number of Court Facilities	2
Filled Staff Positions FY 2013-2014	41
<u>Filled Staff Positions FY 2008-2009</u>	<u>53</u>
Total Lost Positions in 5 years	-12(22% reduction)
Staff positions expected as of July 2014	36
Adjusted positions lost since FY 2008-09	-17(32%reduction)

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Laura J. Masunaga
Court Executive Officer	Mary Frances McHugh
Executive Office Contact	(530) 842-8218

Budget Challenges for FY 2014-15

- *Staff layoffs are expected due to insufficient funding resulting from inequities in the funding methodology which is based on filings, which compromises access to justice for communities served by smaller courts.*
- *Siskiyou County is historically depressed, with a persistent unemployment rate of over 15%; in this environment, saving jobs is very important to the Court.*
- *The imposition of a 1% reserve as of 7-01-14 will impair the Court's ability to meet its monthly payroll.*
- *There has been a 15% increase in homicide case filings in the most recent three year period compared to the same period between 2008 and 2010.*