



# Superior Court of California County of Siskiyou BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

## Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

- There is an erosion of access to justice, most particularly in the family law arena, where 90% of parties are self-represented.
- The Legislature has declared it public policy for the Courts to engage needed experts to help families, such as evaluators, psychologists, and child's counsel, but when a court has no budget for these items there is no access to these important services for families.
- The 1% cap on reserves contributes to the erosion of access to justice because the Court cannot provide important discretionary services to families in need and it prevents the local development of technological solutions that would support access to justice throughout the County.

### Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

Reduced availability of Facilitator and self-help services by 50%, many services are now only available by appointment.

### Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

- Court reporter staff reduced from 3 FTE to 2 FTE in 2011, unchanged. This reduction causes delays because of the limited number of court reporters in Siskiyou County.
- The Court has a very difficult time getting interpreters for exotic languages often required in traffic cases and cannot afford the costs to have these interpreters brought in from around the state.

### Counters / Clerks / Telephones

- Reduced the number of hours of public access for all court divisions: Criminal/Family Law/Civil.
- At the Yreka Courthouse, all windows close at 4pm; during the noon hour there is limited filing available, which is not ADA accessible. These closures impair court users' ability to handle court business during their lunch hour or after work.

### Closed Courtrooms (2) and Court Houses (1)

- Tulelake courtroom, closed in FY 11-12, remains closed; users from Tulelake must travel either 30 minutes to Dorris or 2 hours to Yreka. All calendars and services from the Tulelake court were consolidated with the Dorris Branch of the Court and are heard only once a month.
- On January 6, 2014 the Weed Court facility was closed and the Happy Camp Courtroom was closed. There are no longer any court facilities in either location. Court users from Weed and south must now travel at least 30 minutes to Yreka for service; those in Happy Camp and west must travel at least one hour one way to Yreka.

### Court Security / Safety / Facilities

There has been a marked increase in the need for qualified psychological evaluators in criminal matters and there is no funding source for this legally mandated cost.

### Staff Impacts / Furloughs / Layoffs / Unfilled Vacancies

- Staff reductions have been achieved through voluntary retirements or separations, resulting in a 29.6% staff reduction from FY 2008-09 to FY 2014-15. Staff has had no COLAs since 2011 (pre WAFM labor contract) and staff pays full PERS and contributes for medical.
- It does not appear the Court will need furloughs for this fiscal year due to the unexpected resignation of the Court Research Attorney, which position is now frozen.
- All unfilled vacancies are frozen or eliminated. Necessary duties are being redistributed among court staff at significant stress to staff.

### Court Demographics

Population Served	45,231
Square Miles Covered	6,347
Total Full service Court Facilities*	1
*Dorris Branch is not full service	

### Court Leadership

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

## Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

- Staff vacancies result in limited public hours due to insufficient staff coverage, which compromises access to justice
- Siskiyou County is historically depressed, with a persistent unemployment rate of over 15%; in this environment, saving jobs is very important to the Court