



Judicial Branch Budget Snapshot Superior Court of California County of Sonoma

Key Budget Challenges/Priorities

- Sonoma Court is struggling to meet its mandated requirements in criminal cases, leaving those with civil and family matters with completely unacceptable delays, impacting families, children, businesses, and anyone who believes in the justice system for resolving disputes
- Public frustration is visibly mounting, and staff members are burned out and suffering from low morale from being unable to properly serve the public with the 24% reduced staffing levels.

Budget Impacts

General Budget Reduction Impacts to the Public

- Public must wait three times longer for document processing; processing time for judgments is now four (4) months
- Child custody investigations are no longer conducted, conservatorship investigations has doubled to 16 weeks
- Backlogs and increased errors are occurring since less staff has to do more with less, creating critical due process issues for the public including erroneous arrests on warrants; warrant recalls, and purges

Reduced Public Access: Self-Help/Mediator/Facilitator Services

- Wait time for a mandatory child custody mediation appointment is 12-16 weeks—four times longer than usual—affecting child visitation orders and/or children in detrimental situations
- Wait time to process adoptions, termination of parental rights and guardianships increased to approximately four (4) months

Reduced Public Access: Court Reporters/Interpreters

- Reporter positions held vacant for several years, causing increases in delinquent transcripts; Court is down 8 reporter positions
- When interpreters other than Spanish are not available, matters are continued to another date

Reduced Public Access: Public Service Counters and Clerks

- Civil information window eliminated; lobby/public access reduced by one (1) hour daily
- Long lines at counters and delays in service in Traffic and Collections Unit
- Wait times of up to 30 minutes in the telephone queue

Closures: Courtrooms and Courthouses

- Court may consider closing civil courtrooms if funding reductions occur in FY 2013-14, increasing the backlog of civil cases

Staff Reductions: Furloughs, Layoffs, Unfilled Vacancies

- Court currently has 50 vacant positions, a 24% staff vacancy rate
- All employees, including commissioners, participated in mandatory furlough program of 10 days in FY 2009-10

Impacts: Court Security Services

- Contracted screening services have not yet reduced, but may soon

Annual Allocation*

Total Allocation FY 2008-2009	\$ 34,017,189
Est. Allocation FY 2012-2013**	\$ 28,282,363
Percentage change	-16.9%

*Does not reflect unfunded cost increases

**For comparison purposes only, includes court security funding

Sonoma Facilities Overview

Number of court facilities	5
Capital construction projects	1 (delayed to FY 14-15)

Judicial Workload/Employees as of Dec. 2012:

Population served	487,011
Judicial officers	24
Judicial officers needed	28.3
Filled staff positions FY 08-09	220
Filled staff positions FY 12-13	175

Case Statistics (Fiscal Year 2010-11)

Felony filings	3,192
Misdemeanor filings (incl. traffic)	15,098
Infraction filings (incl. traffic)	79,217
Civil filings	9,529
Family and juvenile filings	5,646

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. René August Chouteau
Court Executive Officer	José Octavio Guillén