

Superior Court of California County of Trinity BUDGET SNAPSHOT

January 2014

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2014-15

- *Homicide filings in January 2014 (for one month) equaled the homicide filings for all of 2013. The trend started in 2011, resulting in a 400% increase at the peak.*
- *Public access using improved technology is compromised due to ongoing budget shortfalls. The 1% reserve cap prevents technological advancement.*
- *New courthouse construction projects are on hold indefinitely despite critical needs, impacting the safety of court users and employees, as well as public access.*
- *Lack of jury assembly room in the historic courthouse means jurors often sit on the hallway floor. The historical courthouse remains the property of Trinity County; current statute prohibits the Judicial Council from allocating funds on a non-state building for improvements, e.g., for juror assembly.*

Self-Help / Facilitator Services / CCRC

- FLF/Self-Help attorney's services have been reinstated but court still contracts outside services at increased travel costs.
- Printers at the self help terminals used to download forms still need to be repaired, making terminal use insufficient for access to justice to be meaningful to self-help constituents.
- 25% reduction in operating hours.
- Self-help services for landlord/tenant disputes non-existent
- Child Custody Recommending Counselor now must share office space with self- help due to shortage of office space in deteriorating building.
- Children's waiting room has been converted to storage.

Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

- Court has only one court reporter; the only pro tem court reporters are out of county necessitating increased expense due to travel related costs.
- Courtroom recording device repairs are underway but, due to reduced IT service, the delay has been substantial.
- Interpreters must be contracted for all mandated services with out of county providers at premium expense.
- Court provides no reporters except in mandatory case types.

Counters / Clerks / Telephones

- Court reduced hours to the public effective FY13/14. Offices are closed from 3:00-5:00, decreasing access to justice.
- Clerks have poor and failing technological equipment; scanner and printers need replacement.

Courtrooms / Court Houses

- Court eliminated Juvenile Drug Court (funded under the Collaborative Justice Focus Abuse grant) in FY 2012-13 after funding was diminished and justice partners determined they had insufficient resources to support the program while serious felonies were increasing.

Staff Impacts / Furloughs / Unfilled Vacancies

- Unfilled vacancies grew from 20% to 29% diminishing staffing levels, increasing workloads, and impacting morale.
- Skeleton crews are over burdened with increased workload.

Court Security / Safety / Facilities

- Serious crime is increasing making security deficits alarming. Marshal down to one full time bailiff. No secure facilities for in-custody defendants to confer with counsel, or carry out negotiations. No secure pathway to transport inmates in custody to courtroom. No separate holding areas to isolate in-custody men, women and juveniles.
- Court shares a historic county-owned courthouse facility located in Weaverville, with extremely limited space, poor security, and antiquated infrastructure.

Reduction of Judicial Officers

- There has been a vacancy since January 2013, forcing the court to use visiting judges who commute long distances, at a cost of \$750 per day plus expenses. We must allocate clerk time to coordinate the judicial officer vacancy calendar, which means that clerk doesn't get to serve the public or attend to courtroom proceedings.

Budget Considerations

Budgeted Revenues FY 2013-2014	\$1,720,324
<u>Total Revenues FY 2008-2009</u>	<u>\$2,017,175</u>
Five-Year Revenue Reduction	-\$296,851
Current Year Unfunded Employee Health Benefits and Retirement Costs	-\$34,458
Share of \$60 million augmentation	\$43,420

Court Demographics

Population Served	13,722
Square Miles Covered	3,208
Total Number of Court Facilities	1
Filled Staff Positions FY 2013-2014	15
<u>Filled Staff Positions FY 2008-2009</u>	<u>16</u>
Lost Positions in 5 years	-1 (5% reduction)

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Elizabeth W. Johnson
Court Executive Officer	Cindy Van Schooten
Executive Office Contact	(530) 623-1369

Budget Challenges for FY 2014-15

Trinity Court has been chronically understaffed. Backlogs are growing, access to justice is impacted, and service is offered on only the most basic level. While the number of homicide filings dropped from 2012 to 2013, we have experienced a 200% increase in homicide filings since 2010. We have critical security and safety issues; weapons were confiscated from nearly 2 out of every 100 people entering the courthouse in past 7 months. Courthouse construction and improvement projects have been put on hold indefinitely despite critical needs.