

# Superior Court of California County of Tulare BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

## Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

- Address ways to assist court users because closed courthouses require the public to travel further
- Reduce long lines and wait times which cause court users to lose income to attend court

### Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

- Self-Help attorney on staff replaced by paralegal for cost savings
- Self-Help/FLF space reduced by half for savings on lease
- Self-Help staff offering more help through group sessions; no longer able to offer as many individual Self-Help sessions due to staff reductions
- The demand is higher for Self-Help in other languages; the court is not able to provide an increase in language access due to the reduction in staff

### Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

Four (4) full time court reporters have been terminated and three (3) full time per diem court reporters are no longer utilized

### Counters / Clerks / Telephones

Ten (10) counter staff people were laid off in FY 2008-09 and have not been replaced, which continues to cause long lines and wait times for court users. Because these positions remain vacant, there has been an increase in the Court's error ratio and burn out factor at the counter

### Courtrooms and Court Houses

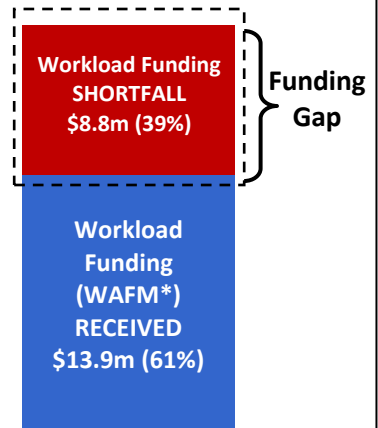
- Tulare Court facility was closed in August 2012 requiring the public to travel to Visalia or Porterville to go to Court
- Dinuba is open only 1 day a week, and only to pay fees
- Porterville Court opened in October 2013 and one floor continues to be unused; while the intent was to provide full services, it is not fiscally possible to fully staff this court

### Judicial Officers

One Court Commissioner was laid off in 2012 due to budget reductions

## Funding Shortfall

**\*WAFM is the Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology. It describes how much funding courts need based on their workload. In the current year, the workload-based allocation needed in Tulare was calculated at \$22.7 million but the court received \$13.9 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



## Court Demographics

Population Served	459,446
Square Miles Covered	4,839
Total Number of Court Facilities	4

## Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Gary L. Paden
Court Executive Officer	LaRayne Cleek
Executive Office Contact	(559) 730-5000

## Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

- We have suffered a greater than 15% reduction in our operating budget, and are 39% below our WAFM need
- We have been forced to lay off 39 court employees since FY 2008-09
- Public safety is compromised because law enforcement officers must now travel to the main courthouse in Visalia and wait, taking them out of their communities due to closures of two courthouses since FY 2008-09

## The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM)

The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM) calculates the total funding needed for California's 58 trial courts based on case filings, workload and other factors.

To do this, WAFM relies on results from what we call the Resource Assessment Study (RAS) model to estimate total staffing needed using a weighted caseload model. Developed in partnership with national experts, the RAS model is based on a time study of over 5,000 case processing staff in 24 California trial courts. The study established a set of caseweights (amount of time in minutes to process a case from initial filing through any post-disposition activity) understanding that certain types of filings take more time and resources to handle than others. The weighted filings are used to estimate total staff needed in each court.

The WAFM model converts the staff need data into dollars, taking into account average salaries, benefits, operating expenses and equipment, and the local cost of labor using the Bureau of Labor Statistics as a benchmark. A "funding floor" is applied to the smallest trial courts because there is a basic operating threshold that must be met in order to provide service to the public. In other words, California's small courts do not have economies of scale, and yet there are basic expenditures that even the smallest courts must make. The result is, for each court, an estimate of the core operations funding required to adequately process its workload. This is known as the court's WAFM share.

Starting in FY 2013-14, a portion of each court's allocation is being recalculated according to its WAFM share. (A court's WAFM share is different from the courts' historical share of the statewide funding. The WAFM calculation tells us what the trial courts need to function based on current filings, whereas the historical share was based on the amount each court received from its county.)

Unfortunately, the total WAFM funding needed for all 58 courts exceeds the funding currently appropriated in the state budget by as much as \$800 million. (This is the WAFM funding gap.) To manage the budget reductions resulting from the implementation of WAFM in the absence of full trial court funding, the Judicial Council approved applying WAFM incrementally to each court's historical share of statewide funding, applying it 100% only to "new" money appropriated in the budget. New money is any undesignated general court operations funding increase above the FY 2012-13 State funding level.

The rules of application adopted by the Judicial Council are as follows:

- Each year beginning in FY 2013-14, and through/including FY 2017-18, incrementally more of the historical (base) funding (using FY 2012-13 as the base) will be subject to WAFM, until 50% of the FY 2012-13 base is distributed according to WAFM;
- All undesignated court operations state funding increases after FY 2012-13 are distributed according to the WAFM shares; and
- For each dollar of new state funding, one dollar of the historical base will be reallocated using WAFM.