



What Judicial Officers and Court Practitioners Are Saying About the Need for Court Facility Bond Funding

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS TO THE
LEGISLATURE, 2005-2006



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Introduction

With more than 8 million filings annually, California's court system is the largest in America. California's court buildings are in a state of significant disrepair, and they require substantial improvements to help ensure the safety and security of court users, greater court efficiency, and equal access for all.

The AOC's trial court capital outlay plan outlines over 180 projects to improve trial court facilities statewide through renovation, additions, and new construction.¹ At least one project is proposed for each county.

Substantial long-term funding is needed to renovate and replace existing court facilities. Revenue received through court filing fees alone is insufficient to finance these projects.

Court leaders and members of the Bench-Bar Coalition, in letters of support for court facility funding, have painted real-life pictures of the conditions that currently exist in court facilities.² Excerpts from these letters are included in this report.

¹ Available online at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/fiveyear.htm>

² Court-specific information included in this document is self-reported by the Superior Courts of California and is not verified by the AOC.

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I. BAY AREA REGION

A. Superior Court of Alameda County

The Superior Court of Alameda County is expecting a population growth of 21 percent over the next two decades. The majority of the growth is taking place in the eastern portion of the county, including the cities of Livermore, Pleasanton, and Dublin. In addition to population growth, the court's overall caseload has been projected to grow 22 percent over the next 20 years—equal to the growth in population. In order to accommodate the growth in population and cases, new, modern, and rehabilitated facilities are needed to serve the residents of Alameda County.

B. Superior Court of Contra Costa County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

The greatest need is for a new courthouse in eastern Contra Costa County, which includes some of the fastest growing cities in the state: Brentwood, Oakley, Antioch, and Pittsburg. One judge in Martinez handles the workload from the eastern region of our county that cannot be assigned to that courthouse due to the physical limitations of the existing building in that area.

2. Old Courthouse, 725 Court Street, Martinez, CA

- a. Our current facility is a 50-year-old “office” building that has been retrofitted over the years to a three judge, one commissioner courthouse.
- b. The facility requires prisoner transportation without proper public safety separation.
- c. Our court staff is jammed into the available clerks’ office space.
- d. The witness and victim waiting room is the size of a small office and many days is jampacked.
- e. Witnesses, defendants, and victims pass each other and face confrontations in the public hallways.
- f. Trial attorneys have limited space to conduct client interviews and do so many times in the public hallways.

C. Superior Court of Monterey County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. Our court currently operates 20 courtrooms in six facilities located throughout the county.
- b. All facilities lack attorney/client conference rooms, victim/witness waiting rooms, children's waiting room, adequate and appropriate public waiting spaces, and sufficient file storage.
- c. Parking at all facilities is unsecured for the public, judicial officers, and court staff.
- d. There are no security entrances at any court location. Not every courtroom within the county has a metal detector prior to entering the courtroom.
- e. There is no perimeter security at any court location.
- f. Daily approximately 150 prisoners are brought to the courtrooms through public or judicial corridors.
- g. There is a holding cell in the basement at the Salinas court location, but no secure elevators to the courtrooms.
- h. Inmate transportation is through judicial and public corridors, bringing defendants within a few feet of victims, family members, court staff, judicial officers, and the general public.
- i. All court users are at risk due to the lack of security and inadequate court facilities at all court locations within Monterey County.

2. Salinas Courthouse, 240 Church Street, Salinas, CA

- a. This courthouse was built in the late 1960s.
- b. The Salinas campus is comprised of three separate wings connected with breezeways.
- c. Two of the courtrooms in the north wing of the campus are operationally deficient in their circular design and do not meet Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.
- d. All courtrooms lack adequate support space, separate zones of circulation, and adjacent prisoner holding areas.
- e. The prisoners are kept in jury boxes, and frequently additional seating is needed to accommodate the high number of inmates.

- f. Filing space remains at maximum capacity with offsite storage and staff overtime to maintain the status quo. The capacity for case file storage at the Salinas facility is approximately 187,242 cases with an average of 1,873 new filings per month. As of February 2005, the Salinas facility has only 4 percent storage space available.
- g. Maximum file space capacity for Salinas will be reached in less than 6 months and less than 10 months in Monterey.
- h. At the Salinas campus there are multiple points of entry.

3. Monterey Courthouse, 1200 Aguajito Road, Monterey, CA

- a. This courthouse was built in the late 1960s.
- b. The Monterey facility houses the self-help center, which doubles as the family law facilitator's office due to lack of adequate space.
- c. The jury assembly room is located outside the courtroom in a separate wing and is not equipped with telephone or computer cabling.
- d. There is inadequate seating and a lack of juror essentials.
- e. When the public elevator is out of commission, the public must go through the clerk's area to use another elevator. Security issues become increasingly challenging when the public must use judicial and clerical areas to migrate through the facility.
- f. At the Monterey campus there are multiple points of entry.

4. King City Courthouse, 250 Franciscan Way, King City, CA

This courthouse was built in the late 1960s.

5. Marina Courthouse, 3180 Del Monte Boulevard, Monterey, CA

This courthouse was built in the mid 1990s.

D. Superior Court of Napa County

1. Juvenile Courthouse, 1422 Natividad Road, Salinas, CA

- a. Families and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers who visit our county's juvenile courthouse have poor access with minimal parking for disabled people and staff who are not protected from rain or other elements.

- b. One bailiff watches over the dependency and delinquency hearings. The Juvenile Hall courtroom has no other safety precautions in place. Should an angry or drug-addicted parent have his or her parental rights terminated, those in the courtroom could potentially be in grave danger if the parent decides to retaliate against the people he or she perceives took their children away from them.
- c. There is no privacy in the waiting area that exists outside of the courtroom. Parents, children, foster parents, attorneys, and CASA volunteers do not have a place in which to consult with their clients in a confidential manner.
- d. The rundown quality of our courtroom makes going to court a scary experience for our children and families.
- e. The condition of our juvenile court facility places court clients, employees, and the general public at risk.
- f. The courthouse is a cinder-block building without an adequate waiting area or ADA-compliant restroom facilities for the public.
- g. The building ceiling leaks during heavy rains, and on two occasions in the last year the facility has had to be closed due to water problems, resulting in juvenile proceedings being moved to the criminal court building on very short notice.
- h. Families of children involved in dependency and delinquency proceedings are required to wait in a 20-by-60-foot waiting area with inadequate seating. They wait alongside the attorneys, witnesses, social workers, and child protective workers, who are frequently perceived as “the enemy” because of their roles in proceedings relating to the termination of parental rights. Many people must stand as the individual cases are called since confidentiality requirements preclude seating in the courtroom.
- i. In juvenile delinquency cases, the frequent involvement of youth in gang activities brings representatives of rival gangs into court simultaneously as victims and witnesses as well as wards of the court. They are confined in this same cloistered waiting room.

E. Superior Court of San Benito County

- 1. San Benito Courthouse, 440 Fifth Street, Hollister, CA
 - a. Court operations are currently located in a building of 8,800 square feet. However, we share occupancy of the building with four county departments. As a result of dual occupancy, the building is

riddled with structural and safety flaws that diminish our court's public service.

- b. Staff members and jurors must provide their service in an environment that constantly exposes them to danger. Due to the lack of a single-point entry and holding cells, inmates are transported daily into outdated courtrooms that do not allow for the safe movement of anyone in attendance.
- c. The overall lack of adequate space has triggered a series of recurring gridlock problems with calendars, new employees, and file storage.

F. Superior Court of San Francisco County

1. Statewide Facilities Deficiencies

- a. Conditions in many court facilities throughout California jeopardize public safety and security, undermine court efficiency, and limit equal access.
- b. Existing court facilities are not equipped for the current volumes of caseload administration.
- c. Existing court facilities do not provide adequate access for people with disabilities.
- d. Existing court facilities often lack up-to-date protections, including fire safety systems.
- e. Existing court facilities often lack appropriate barriers between in-custody defendants and the public.
- f. These deficiencies pose an unacceptable risk to court users, court staff, judicial officers, and law enforcement personnel.

G. Superior Court of Santa Clara County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. The proposed legislation would allow our court to pursue construction of a new downtown family courthouse that would consolidate 22 courtrooms and ancillary offices in one building.
- b. Our court currently occupies six county-leased buildings that should be consolidated into the new downtown family courthouse.
- c. Benefits of the consolidation would include:

- (1) Enhanced court security to protect the public
- (2) Significant savings in sheriff's transport costs
- (3) Greater efficiency for ancillary agencies
- (4) Enhanced services to the public, including:
 - Centralized support services to the public
 - Secured children's waiting room for use by litigants
 - Self-service center for people without lawyers
 - Separate waiting rooms for victims and abusers
 - Adequate facilities for grand jurors
 - Mediation rooms for settlement of cases

From a business perspective, savings would be realized with the elimination of lease costs and reduction of court security costs.

H. Superior Court of Solano County

1. Hall of Justice, 600 Union Avenue, Fairfield, CA

- a. The Superior Court of Solano County serves a county that is experiencing exponential population growth, as determined by the Association of Bay Area Governments. Our existing facilities do not adequately meet the needs of the citizens of Solano County.
 - (1) Lack of space dictates that the court cannot open a long-planned self-help center for pro per litigants—the fastest growing segment of court users.
 - (2) There is no room for a child care facility for court users and litigants.
 - (3) There is no room for a civil mediation center, which would assist in the expeditious resolution of litigation.
 - (4) Court staff is literally jammed into space formerly used as closets and supply rooms.
- b. Over and above the space needs, the Hall of Justice is completely inadequate for the purposes of health and safety.

- (1) This is a building that floods on the average every two to three years. In the last 20 years this building has flooded five times. On New Year's Day, January 1, 2006, the building again flooded. The entire first floor, consisting of three juvenile courtrooms, judges' chambers, staff offices, and the jury assembly hall, were damaged to the point that the area had to be evacuated in order to allow the waters to recede. The damages necessitated the removal of flooring, sheetrock, and carpet and the transfer of court staff and hearings to an unoccupied library and to the county's government center.
- (2) The movement of these functions has been risky, as adequate security is not available in those provisional locations.
- (3) To exacerbate the flooding problems, the bacteria *E Coli* was flushed throughout the Hall of Justice, subjecting our staff and the citizens of Solano County to potential health risks.

2. Old Solano Courthouse, 321 Tuolumne Street, Vallejo, CA

- a. For the past five years, the Superior Court of Solano County has sought funds to move three civil courts and the civil clerk's office into the old Solano courthouse. The old courthouse is vacant. The county would assist the court in a portion of the functional renovation necessary to allow the court to return to this historical building.
- b. The superior court has advocated for the necessary funds to facilitate this move. With a \$1 million contribution from the county, the court would need an additional \$1.5 million. While not insignificant, this amount is a fraction of the cost that would be necessary to build a new facility.
- c. Additional benefits would include preserving and fully utilizing a historic courthouse as the only operating historical court in the state of California.
- d. There is also room for the civil mediation center in the old courthouse.
- e. The court has already obtained a funding grant to make this a reality; all that is needed is the space.

I. Superior Court of Sonoma County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. The Superior Court of Sonoma County desperately needs additional courtrooms.
- b. The criminal trial backlog is running roughshod through the civil courtrooms in our county.
- c. Family law departments are being used for felony jury trials.
- d. The presiding judge has indicated that civil trial departments will soon be converted for use as felony jury trial courtrooms.
- e. We are rapidly approaching a status similar to that which exists in Riverside County where all civil cases are held in abeyance while all courtroom facilities are dedicated exclusively to criminal proceedings and trials.
- f. The local bench has done a good job of anticipating the problem and has arranged for a location for additional courtrooms to be constructed. In fact, a final set of plans and specifications for the construction of the building exists. Everything is in place. All that is needed is the money.
- g. This courtroom facility is vital to the continued service of the community through the local civil court system.

2. Hall of Justice, 600 Administration Drive, Santa Rosa, CA

- a. The Hall of Justice is old and inadequate. It is where all of our criminal and family law matters are heard.
- b. This current structure is replete with inefficiencies that require us to process the criminal matters in ways that are far from satisfactory.
 - (1) We are still required to have female defendants transported down the public hallways from the jail to the courtrooms.
 - (2) Some of the courtrooms were built for civil use and therefore are simply not large enough to hold criminal trials.
 - (3) We may be forced to use an outlying facility approximately 20 miles away, which would require transportation of

defendants up and down the freeway for their daily court appearances.

- (4) If defendants are no longer willing to waive time for trial, we simply could not get to trial the serious felony trial matters we have pending in our criminal departments within the mandatory 60-day time period, resulting in the dismissal of charges and the release of those defendants.
- (5) We have unfortunately had an influx of gang-related serious crimes, including murders, the trials of which impose a severe strain on our already overburdened calendars.
- (6) The necessity to transport defendants to outlying courtrooms imposes both additional expenses as well as providing potential opportunities for the escape of prisoners if there is an accident.

- c. We currently have other outlying facilities for civil matters, but we are not able to try criminal cases there because they do not have holding cells or other additional security needs. The construction of additional criminal facilities is therefore an absolute necessity for our county.

II. CENTRAL REGION

A. Superior Court of Fresno County

1. Fresno County Courthouse, 1100 Van Ness Avenue, Fresno, CA

- a. This courthouse was designed in 1965 with a 20-year life expectancy. No one envisioned the security and workload needs that exist today. For example, in-custody individuals are transported through public hallways where victims, jurors, and other court users are present.
- b. Due to a critical shortage of courtrooms, court operations have been scattered around the downtown area and its outskirts. All of these court facilities:
 - are overcrowded;
 - have serious security deficiencies;
 - lack adequate access; and

- have conditions that result in a fragmented delivery of service.

B. Superior Court of Inyo County

1. Independence Superior Court, 168 North Edwards Street, Independence, CA
 - a. Our historic courthouse in Independence, though beautiful, is wholly inadequate.
 - b. The continued use of the facility for the day-to-day operations of the court compromises the physical safety of all court users, impairs the effective and efficient operation of the court, and inhibits access to the court.
 - (1) The courthouse does not have an elevator, and court users must climb three long staircases to reach the main courtroom.
 - (2) As a result, we often use a makeshift courtroom in the basement, which presents its own security issues, as it is on ground level with glass windows. The judge and court staff must walk through the prisoners and audience section to reach the bench.
 - c. The facility does not have any secure holding facilities, and is not ADA compliant. We have seen the tragic results of inadequate security. A shootout with law enforcement personnel resulted after an individual armed with an automatic rifle confronted a member of the court staff at the nonsecure window of the clerk's office in the courthouse in Independence.
 - d. Our population center is located in and around the city of Bishop, where our limited court facilities are inadequate to meet the needs of the public.

C. Superior Court of Mariposa County

1. Mariposa County Courthouse, 5088 Bullion Street, Mariposa, CA
 - a. Families and CASA volunteers who visit our county's court are not protected in case of an earthquake.
 - b. Our historic courthouse has poor access for disabled people, with only one ramp entrance that is not protected from rain or other elements.

- c. Security is nearly nonexistent, putting both of our judges and court staff at risk.
- d. Dependency cases are heard in the cramped law library.

D. Superior Court of Merced County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. Our court system in Merced County has been severely impacted by the inadequate court facilities in which we now work.
- b. The incarcerated criminal defendants who are awaiting trial are often placed in the courtroom in close proximity to citizens and court staff, creating the distinct possibility of violence.
- c. Inadequate courtroom facilities also necessitate overcrowded calendars and courtrooms, placing severe strains on our court security officers to maintain order and allow the court to conduct its business.

E. Superior Court of Stanislaus County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. Court facilities in our county—and in most of the counties in California—are in aging, overcrowded, and inefficient buildings. County planners could not have envisioned in the 1940s and 1950s the tremendous growth taking place in the Central Valley.
- b. The county and city governments in our area have implemented major capital improvement projects for their operations, but the long-range facility needs of the courts have been ignored.
- c. The buildings that we use compromise the safety of citizens and the administration of justice on a daily basis.

2. Modesto Main Courthouse, 800 11th Street, Modesto, CA

- a. Our main courthouse in Modesto is not large enough to provide courtrooms and support staff space for all of our judicial operations.
- b. We currently have three judicial officers in remote courtrooms.
- c. We have one judge who does not even have a courtroom! That particular judge cannot be assigned a regular court calendar, and this significantly decreases our efficiency.

- d. The courtroom wing of the current courthouse is 46 years old.
- e. The district attorney wing, which will be vacated in mid-2006, is over 60 years old.
- f. Numerous problems include:
 - (1) Court users are subjected to crowded lobbies;
 - (2) Bathroom facilities are small and inadequate;
 - (3) A confusing mass of corridors house the various operations of the court;
 - (4) More significantly, members of the public are exposed to prisoners who are transported across public hallways in order to move them from the jail to the courtrooms;
 - (5) Feuding families and rival gang members may find themselves in very close quarters; and
 - (6) Other important deficiencies include:
 - Courtrooms are small and not one is ADA compliant;
 - Public restrooms are not ADA compliant;
 - The roof leaks;
 - The heating and air-conditioning system is in poor condition;
 - Family law mediation rooms are not secure;
 - There is limited public seating in hallways;
 - Public parking is limited;
 - The jury assembly room is too small; and
 - People wait in line to enter the building where they pass through a single security system; in inclement weather this poses a hardship, especially for the disabled.

F. Superior Court of Tulare County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. The Superior Court of Tulare County ranks as a midsize court in volume and is made up of five divisions serving this large, rural county.
- b. Access to the court and the safety of court clientele and court staff is of paramount importance.

2. Tulare County Courthouse, 2300 West Burrel Avenue, Visalia, CA

- a. Our largest court facility, located in the aging county courthouse, is plagued with environmental obstacles of mold and asbestos and cannot meet seismic standards.
- b. Prisoners are regularly walked through public hallways because of inadequate pedestrian circulation spaces.

3. Court Facilitator's Office, 1612 West Mineral King Avenue, Visalia, CA

- a. This office, which epitomizes outreach to the population to guarantee access to the court, is located in rented commercial space because there is no space available within the court's complex.
 - (1) That office is completely without any building or personal court security.
 - (2) This aging cornerstone of local government
 - does not meet current ADA standards;
 - contains unreliable fire alarm and fire suppression systems; and
 - cannot be further modified to present a safe and secure environment for litigants, jurors, witnesses, and court staff.

4. Porterville Government Center, 87 East Morton Avenue, Porterville, CA

- a. The second largest court facility in our county can only be described as a "tear-down." Its deficiencies include:
 - (1) No prisoner holding cells;

- (2) No jury assembly area;
- (3) Diminutive public service area;
- (4) Overcrowded staff offices; and
- (5) No safe parking.

III. INLAND EMPIRE REGION

A. Superior Court of Riverside County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. Current conditions in many of California’s courthouses—the Superior Court of Riverside County included—are deplorable.
- b. Due to the lack of adequate space in the county’s court facilities, there is a huge potential for violence because plaintiffs and defendants, victims and witnesses, must all be in close proximity to each other, waiting for their cases to be called.
- c. Imagine being a victim of domestic violence waiting outside in a long line for security where the perpetrator can just walk up and stab or shoot you, because of inadequate facilities
- d. Building deficiencies such as these jeopardize public safety and security, undermine court efficiency, and limit the public’s access to court services and ultimately justice.

2. All Superior Court of Riverside County Criminal Courthouses

There are no victim and witness waiting rooms in any of the courthouses that hear criminal calendars. This means that victims and witnesses cannot be separated from the defendants or members of the defendant’s family (who may be gang members themselves). As a result, victims and witnesses are often intimidated.

3. Temecula Courthouse, 41002 County Center Drive, Temecula, CA

- a. The Temecula courthouse, which hears small claims, traffic, and limited civil cases, is located in a strip mall.
- b. These calendars (for what we call “people’s court”) are huge.
- c. People wait in the parking lot until their cases are called.

4. Indio Juvenile Courthouse, 47-671 Oasis, Indio, CA

The fire marshal is called to our juvenile courthouse in Indio on a regular basis because of overcrowding.

5. Downtown Riverside Courthouses

- Family Law Court, 4175 Main Street, Riverside, CA
- 1903 Courthouse, 4050 Main Street, Riverside, CA
- 1933 Courthouse, 4050 Main Street, Riverside CA
- Hall of Justice, 4100 Main Street, Riverside, CA
- Riverside Annex, 3609 11th Street, Riverside, CA

- a. There are so many jurors reporting for the courtrooms in downtown Riverside that many have to sit on the floor in the jury assembly room.
- b. On most days, our jury room in downtown Riverside is packed to capacity (430+). Often jurors have to sit on the floor. We would like to relocate, but there is no other space in the building nor is there adequate space in other buildings nearby.
- c. Because we don't have enough room, our legal research attorneys in downtown Riverside have been housed in noncourt buildings for over 10 years. Their current location in rented space has inadequate space and rodent problems. Their previous building was condemned and closed due to mold problems and is scheduled to be demolished soon.

6. Hemet Courthouse, 880 North State Street, Hemet, CA

In Hemet, one courtroom has been converted to storage, rendered completely unusable as a courtroom, because the roof leaks.

7. Annex Justice Center, 46-200 Oasis Street, Indio, CA

In order to have entrance screening for the four courtrooms in our annex in Indio, we would have to station security staff and screening equipment at each courtroom door. As a result, people entering these courtrooms are either scanned with handheld security wands or not screened at all.

B. Superior Court of San Bernardino County

1. Statewide Facilities Deficiencies

- a. 23 court facilities are in trailers

- b. 25 percent of courtrooms have no space for a jury box or the jury box is used for prisoners, including courtrooms in San Bernardino County.
- c. 68 percent of court buildings lack up-to-date fire and life safety systems, such as sprinklers, proper exits, and emergency lighting, including court buildings in San Bernardino County.
- d. 78 percent of court buildings lack adequate access for people with disabilities, including court buildings in San Bernardino County.
- e. 22 courthouses do not check for weapons, including some court buildings in San Bernardino County.
- f. 50 percent and more of courthouses are not earthquake-safe, including the central courthouse in San Bernardino.

2. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. The Superior Court of San Bernardino County currently holds court sessions in 15 different locations. Of these facilities, only our new juvenile dependency court adequately meets the needs of court users, judicial officers, and staff.
- b. Court facilities lack adequate secure areas for prisoner movement.
- c. Public hallways are crowded and inefficient.
- d. The building infrastructure is functioning poorly.
- e. The court facilities fail to meet the needs of the disabled and are generally dilapidated.

3. San Bernardino Courthouse, 351 North Arrowhead Avenue, San Bernardino, CA

- a. Our central courthouse in San Bernardino is woefully inadequate in every sense of the word and is one of the most seismically dangerous courthouses in the state.
- b. We are forced to design court calendars and services to accommodate the inadequacies of the building rather than design services based on community need and efficiencies.
- c. On a daily basis throughout our court, citizens, judges, and staff are put at risk due to lack of security.

- d. We cannot provide necessary and mandated services such as self-help centers and children’s waiting rooms due to space limitations.
- e. Victims, witnesses, and jurors wait in crowded public hallways with the families and friends of criminal defendants.

IV. LOS ANGELES REGION

A. Superior Court of Los Angeles County

1. Statewide Facilities Deficiencies

- a. The current state of California’s court facilities makes going to court difficult or impossible for most people with disabilities. A shocking 75 percent of California’s courthouses are not accessible to people with disabilities.
- b. We are confronted with public safety issues due to the fact that over half of California’s courts pose substantial seismic risks.
- c. The court also faces efficiency of space concerns due to the population growth in California. For example, the courts statewide will need an additional 5.8 million square feet just to accommodate the current population in California today.

2. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. In a recent lawsuit against the County of Los Angeles, it was found that all of Los Angeles’s courthouses had serious accessibility problems.
- b. People with disabilities routinely face obstacles that discourage, or even prevent, them from using the court system.
- c. Barriers include lack of accessible entrances; delay while awaiting security to open “special” accessible entrances; and inaccessible jury assembly rooms, witness stands, and spectator seating.
- d. As the largest court in California, we are constantly facing the challenges of operating court facilities that are handicapped by numerous inadequacies such as out-of date building designs that contribute to the increased cost of security.

B. Superior Court of Santa Barbara County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. In the Superior Court of Santa Barbara County (uniquely, for a court of our size), there is no court building entrance screening whatsoever (at least partially due to facilities deficiencies), among other issues.
- b. We lack sufficient modern court buildings with adequate safety and security for prisoners, judicial officers, staff, and the public.
- c. We lack sufficient and convenient facilities for the jurors and citizens who must use our court.

2. Santa Maria Court, 312 East Cook Street, Santa Maria, CA

This court, like many others in California, has been impacted by the dramatic growth in the state population and the growth and change in the nature of court workloads.

V. NORTHERN REGION

A. Superior Court of El Dorado County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. El Dorado County is one of the fastest growing areas in the state. The last time that our court received a new judge was in 1977, when the seat in which Presiding Judge Suzanne N. Kingsbury serves was created in South Lake Tahoe. During the nearly 30 years since that occurred, our county's population has more than doubled and has probably tripled.
- b. We have four full-time judges in the western part of the county and two in the eastern part of the county, along with three subordinate judicial officers. Each of our bench officers handles every case type. Due to the crowding of our calendars, we only hold jury trials three days a week and hold other calendars on the nontrial days.
- c. We have five court facilities spread over nearly 100 miles. A major mountain pass separates the South Lake Tahoe sites from those on the west end of the county. The distance between these locations prevents our court from operating at peak efficiency, as it is very difficult to transfer cases from one site to another.
- d. None of our courthouses has an extra courtroom to handle visiting judges or overflow.

- e. Most of our courthouses are not ADA compliant and have major seismic, life safety, and security problems that can not be rectified through remodeling. The footprints of many of the sites do not allow room for expansion.
- f. Our county's criminal caseload has increased on an average of 7 percent annually, yet we must continue to keep pace with our workload without additional courtrooms, staff space, or judges to handle our mounting calendars. As a result, cases are continued repeatedly or dismissed due to lack of an available courtroom.
- g. Crime victims and witnesses become understandably angry and frustrated at the delay.
- h. Civil trials are frequently vacated to make room for a criminal trial that has statutory priority, leaving businesses and individuals without a prompt resolution of their dispute.
- i. Our family law litigants have trials continued over a period of weeks or months due to a lack of calendar time because other cases have precedence.

2. Main Street Courthouse, Main Street, Placerville, CA

- a. This is our oldest courthouse, which is located immediately adjacent to Highway 50. Judges and staff must park in a non-secure area in full view of this major thoroughfare.
- b. Prisoners are brought into the rear door, which is also used by judges and staff, and are herded through a public hallway, into the only elevator in the building, and then through another public hallway on the third floor.
- c. There are no holding cells in this courthouse, and prisoners must be kept in courtrooms or the jury deliberation rooms until all of the in-custody matters are concluded.
- d. Children in delinquency proceedings, who are entitled by law to have their cases kept confidential, also must be herded through public areas in the same manner.
- e. This building, which was constructed in the early 1900s, has been plagued with water leaks from an adjacent creek, mold, asbestos, and a myriad of other problems that have caused health issues for court users and staff.

3. Johnson Building, 1354 Johnson Boulevard, South Lake Tahoe, CA
 - a. In our South Lake Tahoe court facility, which was built in 1977, prisoners are brought through a nonsecure, mixed-use hallway, through a back office corridor used by judges and staff, placed into a staff elevator, and walked within six inches of staff work areas before being taken into the courtroom.
 - b. There is a very small public area outside of the courtrooms on the first and second floors and victims, witnesses, jurors, and litigants must mingle together in very tight quarters, often lining the stairwell.
 - c. This flat-roofed building is in an area that receives large quantities of snow, ice, and rain and not surprisingly suffers from regular leaks. Mold and contaminants generated by these leaks have caused bench officers, staff, and court users to suffer severe respiratory problems.

4. El Dorado Building C, 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville, CA
 - a. This facility is located in a mixed-use building that predominantly houses county offices associated with building and planning.
 - b. Our court administration offices are literally intermingled with those of the county planning department.
 - c. Over half of this administrative space consists of open cubicles that can be accessed by anyone who works for the planning department. On that same floor, our small claims department public counter is in an open area not protected by perimeter security.
 - d. Traffic, small claims, and family law matters are heard three days a week in the planning department hearing room without benefit of perimeter security.
 - e. The only perimeter security at this site is contained in the basement, where there is another courtroom in which only criminal matters are heard. While this is probably our nicest courtroom, the acoustics are horrible.
 - f. Due to the county's growth, the board of supervisors and county administration want us to move from this facility because they need the office space for their own operations.

- (1) To facilitate this effort, the county has donated land and a significant amount of money to assist our court to build a new facility and to make the move.
- (2) Lack of sufficient funding resources from the state, needed to complete this project, has prevented this plan from moving forward.
- (3) We are very concerned that the county will become frustrated and reclaim the county funds and land that they have pledged to provide toward constructing court facilities and put those resources to another use.

5. Cameron Park Court Facility, 3321 Cameron Park Drive, Cameron Park, CA

- a. This is a major El Dorado County court facility. This building was constructed during the 1970s and is in relatively good condition.
- b. There is a very small public waiting area and jurors, witnesses, victims, and other court users must mingle together in very tight quarters.
- c. There is no holding cell for prisoners.
- d. Until recently, this building did not have perimeter security.
- e. The judges' chambers are about the size of a closet and are easily accessible from the outside by members of the public.
- f. The building has a flat roof and is prone to leaks.
- g. This facility has some acreage, and we have explored the possibility of remodeling and expanding this site to address some of our most immediate needs, but these efforts have failed due to lack of state funding.

B. Superior Court of Glenn County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. The need for court facility improvements is great.
- b. There are no holding cells for in-custody defendants.
 - (1) Adult in-custody defendants are brought in chains up public stairwells and seated in the courtroom jury box.

- (2) In-custody juvenile defendants are transported to court by way of the judges' chambers.
- c. Litigants, the public, witnesses, jurors, and criminal defendants all must gather in a small inadequate landing area, hallways, and a stairwell until the courtroom doors are open.
- d. When jurors are summoned for trials, there is nowhere for them to assemble, other than the halls, landing, or stairwell.
- e. There are no facilities to accommodate the infirm or physically challenged.
- f. One of our courtrooms does not have a jury deliberation room and jurors are forced to deliberate in the empty courtroom, thus making the courtroom unavailable for other proceedings.
- g. The buildings are not ADA compliant.

C. Superior Court of Humboldt County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. Daily we place victims, witnesses, jurors, children, litigants, staff, and judicial officers at risk with the movement of prisoners through public corridors. The reality of this threat and intimidation places a strain on our process of justice.
- b. Lack of perimeter security and severely inadequate facilities have a direct significant impact on the ability to operate a justice system with fairness and accessibility.
- c. We currently operate in less than 49.5 percent of minimally adequate space for our size. We have 8 courtrooms but run 9.4 courts using space from the county and city facilities.
- d. There is no security and the facilities are unsafe.
- e. We mix the traffic flow of in-custody defendants, jurors, parties, members of the public, judges, and staff due to lack of space and inappropriate design. This puts many at high risk in overcrowded conditions.

D. Superior Court of Lake County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. Superior Court of Lake County court facilities are woefully inadequate and pose a danger to court staff and members of the public.
- b. This superior court has one of the highest numbers of jury trials per judicial position, yet we lack the very basic necessities such as a jury assembly room. We customarily have 150 jurors crowded into the hallways with no place to sit.
- c. Because our facilities lack both weapon screening and holding cells, inmates and potentially armed individuals mingle with our jurors, court staff, judges, and court patrons and their children.

2. South Civic Center, 7000-A South Center Drive, Clearlake, CA

- a. In our Clearlake facility, court staff routinely deal with overflowing toilets that professional plumbers have failed to fix after numerous attempts.
- b. Many of the electrical outlets do not work, and those that do have been known to smolder on occasion.

Others problems include overcrowded workspace and inadequate heating and cooling
- c. . These inadequacies are not simply matters of comfort—they are matters that affect the safety of court patrons and court staff.

E. Superior Court of Placer County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. At our court locations in Placer County, we have firsthand experience in how building deficiencies make it difficult, if not impossible, to provide safe and efficient administration of justice while also providing ADA access, security, and environmental safety.
- b. Safe and secure movement of defendants through court buildings is of particular concern.
- c. Some of our courtrooms are held in old military barracks from the 1940s that are dark and cramped.

F. Superior Court of Sacramento County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. Over 840 trials in our court (criminal and civil) had to be rescheduled last year due to inadequate courtroom facilities.
- b. Record archiving at offsite facilities has caused frequent delays in providing needed files and documents to judicial officers and customers.

2. Gordon Schaber (Downtown) Courthouse, 720 Ninth Street, Sacramento, CA

- a. In-custody defendants are often brought to courtrooms by public hallways. Inmate elevators only reach the fourth floor of the building.
- b. In-custody defendants scheduled for hearings on the fifth and sixth floors must proceed by public stairwells.
- c. The currently inadequate seismic rating for the downtown Sacramento courthouse precludes the county from transferring responsibility for the building to the state as mandated by the Trial Court Facilities Act.
- d. While this court consistently strives to optimize the usage of its facilities, it is facing increasing pressure on those facilities.
- e. During the next 15 years, the population of the Sacramento region is expected to increase by 40 percent.
 - (1) This court's need for judicial officers is expected to increase by 105 percent.
 - (2) This court's need for support staff, including security staff, is expected to increase by 60 percent.
 - (3) This court's space requirements are expected to increase by over 60 percent.
- f. The court's inability to address its facility needs has already impaired the efficiency of its operations and has compromised the safety and security of those conducting business with the court.
- g. Within the last three years, the court has increasingly experienced problems with its electronic security system. These have included:

- (1) Unreliable automatic door locks and the failure of the prisoner transport elevator to operate properly, which have compromised prisoners' isolation from those attending court proceedings.
- (2) Repairing leaks in the downtown courthouse's roof has required significant expenditures for repair costs owing to the presence of asbestos roofing insulation.
- (3) While that condition not only exposes the court to greater repair costs, it also potentially compromises the health of those conducting business in the courthouse.
- (4) Additional conditions resulting in unnecessary court costs necessitated by aging and inadequate facilities include:
 - increased disruptions to court operations as aging systems fail and neither service nor parts are available to fix them;
 - increased and unnecessary energy costs because the court's facilities were constructed before energy saving technologies now commonly available; and
 - the lack of infrastructure amenities and power supplies sufficient to support the implementation of the latest electronic communication and data transmission technologies.

h. Inadequate court facilities negatively impact the court's clientele by:

- (1) Decreasing the timeliness of court proceedings, because the court's caseload has outstripped the number of available courtrooms;
- (2) Compromising the level of customer service available, as the court's clientele swells beyond the ability of the court's facilities to handle such volumes;
- (3) Exposing the court's clientele to health and safety threats because the court's facilities:
 - are constructed with hazardous materials (i.e., asbestos),
 - have inadequate exiting capabilities;

- lack adequate fire suppression systems,
- require the assembly of potential jurors in a jury assembly room that is too small; and
- are subject to mechanical and electrical failures.

G. Superior Court of San Joaquin County

1. Statewide Facilities Deficiencies

- a. In 2001, the state Task Force on Court Facilities identified critical physical and functional deficiencies in court buildings statewide.
- b. The task force also noted there were 23 California courtrooms located in trailers.
- c. In 41 percent of California courts, in-custody defendants are brought to courtrooms by public hallways and pass by witnesses, jurors, victims, and other court users. As a result, children and victims cannot be separated from perpetrators, jurors come into contact with defendants and witnesses, and defendants may intimidate witnesses.
- d. More than 75 percent of California’s courts do not have adequate access for people with disabilities. None of the Superior Court of San Joaquin County courtroom facilities are fully ADA compliant.

2. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. In the Superior Court of San Joaquin County, the task force rated 11 of 30 courtrooms as “deficient,” the lowest possible rating. Nine were rated “marginal,” the second lowest rating.
- b. Our currently out-of-date building design contributes to inadequate security and increased security costs.

3. Main Courthouse, 222 East Weber Avenue, Stockton, CA

- a. In-custody defendants are brought to courtrooms by public hallways and pass by witnesses, jurors, victims, and other court users. As a result, children and victims cannot be separated from perpetrators, jurors come into contact with defendants and witnesses, and defendants may intimidate witnesses.
- b. The facility poses a substantial seismic risk to court staff and the public.

- c. The jury assembly room is too small to accommodate the number of people asked to appear for jury service.
- 4. Tracy Branch Courthouse, 475 East 10th Street, Tracy, CA
 - a. This facility is a trailer courtroom. This “temporary” facility has been in place now for nearly 20 years.
 - b. This facility lacks jury assembly rooms. Jurors must wait outside.
- 5. Manteca Branch Courthouse, 315 East Center Street, Manteca, CA
 - a. This facility is a trailer courtroom. This “temporary” facility has been in place now for nearly 20 years.
 - b. This facility lacks jury assembly rooms. Jurors must wait outside.
- 6. Lodi Branch Courthouse, 310-315 West Elm Street, Lodi, CA
 - a. Prisoners are currently walked across a busy city street.
 - b. This facility lacks jury assembly rooms. Jurors must wait outside.

H. Superior Court of Shasta County

- 1. Statewide Facilities Deficiencies
 - a. The courts are an integral part of our democracy—they are the infrastructure for critical services and protections for every Californian—and years of neglect have brought the system to a crisis state.
 - b. While the cost of infrastructure improvements may seem imposing, especially in light of California’s ongoing, fiscal uncertainty, it represents only a fraction of the money needed to fully restore California’s court infrastructure. Since future court users will pay for the investment we make now, it is an investment that is fair to the public.
- 2. Countywide Facilities Issues
 - a. Despite our best efforts, courthouses are chronically unable to provide even basic life safety and accessibility.
 - b. Inadequate security places victims (including children), jurors, witnesses, litigants, and employees at risk.
 - c. Without critically needed infrastructure improvements, the courts will be unable to function.

- d. Courthouses need waiting rooms for children. We have none. Children are either brought into the courtroom or are left to wait in the public hallways. The situation is dangerous, and we are failing to protect them because we have an inadequate facility.
- e. As our county continues to grow (much like all counties in California), we have been forced to lease facilities for our growing needs.
- f. The study completed by the Task Force on Court Facilities recommended a courthouse for Shasta County that would house 25 courtrooms with a projected judicial need of 25 judges by the year 2022. We currently have 9 judges and 2 commissioners and a full-time assigned judge.

3. Main Courthouse, 1500 Court Street, Redding, CA

- a. In the Superior Court of Shasta County, our main courthouse is a converted office building constructed over 50 years ago.
- b. An annex was added in 1965–1966, again as an office structure.
- c. Some remodeling has been completed to make the facility workable as court offices and for use as courtrooms, but it is marginal at best.
- d. Major seismic problems have gone untouched.
- e. Routine repairs are not being done or are being postponed because our county does not want to spend dwindling funds on court facilities.
- f. There are no secure hallways for transporting prisoners to many courtrooms.
- g. Public safety is compromised on a daily basis as all trials are held in this facility.
- h. The building where we hear all of our felony arraignments and preliminary hearings has no perimeter security screening.
- i. Judges, court staff, attorneys, and all court visitors are at risk every day in the courtrooms where the most violent individuals are appearing, along with their friends and family.

4. Juvenile Hall, 2680 Radio Lane, Redding, CA
 - a. Our juvenile hall is located approximately five miles from the main courthouse.
 - b. The facility has no security, no panic alarms, no cameras, and one lobby that everyone must use.
 - c. The facility is not safe for judges, court staff, attorneys, or members of the juveniles' families.
 - d. An armed bailiff is present during court proceedings but is busy in the courtroom and cannot see the lobby area to monitor for problems.

5. Jury Assembly Hall, 1451 Court Street, Redding, CA
 - a. Our jurors assemble in a leased church facility near the courthouse.
 - b. Jurors must cross one of the busiest and most dangerous streets in Redding (with no traffic light) to get to the courthouse.
 - c. Jurors are forced to wait in the public hallways along with trial witnesses, attorneys, defendants, and others, making for very unsafe and uncomfortable situations.
 - d. We recently had an angry and near-physical confrontation between an attorney and a witness, all in the view and presence of the jury, because they had nowhere else in our building to assemble.

I. Superior Court of Yolo County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues
 - a. Last year the Superior Court of Yolo County served more than 180,000 people, almost the county's entire population, with filings of over 68,000 per year.
 - b. To service the volume of cases, the court has six locations with a total of 65,305 gross square feet.
 - c. To further compound matters, it is expected that by the year 2020 the population will increase by 33 percent.
 - (1) As a result of anticipated increases in population and case filings, staff are projected to increase by 57 percent by the year 2022.

- (2) It is anticipated that the overall estimated space need will increase to 179,549 gross square feet by the year 2022.
- (3) Without this issue being addressed, the court will be at a significant loss to provide service and access to the public.

2. Historic Courthouse, 725 Court Street, Woodland, CA

- a. The main courthouse, which makes up the majority of the court's gross square footage, was built in 1917 and was intended to serve a dramatically lower capacity.
- b. *Jury assembly room:* The courthouse does not have the capacity to house a proper jury assembly room, forcing jurors to wait in public hallways and increasing the risk of jurors intermingling with witnesses and defendants.
- c. *Children's waiting room:* The courthouse does not have the capacity to house a children's waiting room, which would ensure separation from perpetrators and security breaches.
- d. *Caseload and administration:* Because the court is at maximum capacity, there is no room for the volumes of files, record archiving, and secure criminal evidence storage. In conjunction with another court that has similar spacing shortfalls, we have recently rented storage space over 40 miles out of the county at McClellan Air Force Base.
- e. *Security:* As mentioned, the main courthouse was built in 1917. Because of the historic nature of the building's design, modern security features are not incorporated and increased security mechanisms are required to compensate for such design deficiencies. Several examples of security design deficiencies are:
 - (1) *Secure prisoner transports:* The court's current security design features require in-custody prisoners, both adult and juvenile, to be "chain-ganged" across a major street and through the public courthouse hallways for appearances. This represents both a significant security concern for witnesses, children, and other court users and the possibility of prejudicing prospective jurors.
 - (2) *Security costs:* The security budget represents approximately one-third of the court's total trial court budget. Inefficient building design and the lack of in-house holding facilities requires multiple officers to escort prisoners to and from the jail to the main courthouse, often several times each day, at a substantial cost to the court.

Better and modern courthouse designs would facilitate a significant reduction in security costs.

- f. *Safety*: In accordance with the Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002, a seismic assessment was conducted on the main courthouse facility. This assessment scored building structures' ability to withstand a seismic event as a result of an earthquake. The rating system scored buildings from a level 1 to a level 5, with level 5 being the most at risk. The main courthouse received a level 5 rating—the highest and most substantial level of risk to life and safety.

3. Traffic Court, 601 Court Street, Woodland, CA

Because of limited space, there is no waiting area for traffic court clients. The public is required to wait outside, in all types of weather, before their cases are heard.

VI. ORANGE REGION

A. Superior Court of Orange County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. Court facilities in the Superior Court of Orange County have inadequate security and prisoner holding areas, insufficient accessibility, and antiquated life safety systems.
- b. Severe overcrowding in prisoner holding facilities and insufficient space for the appropriate separation of in-custody defendants pose potential threats for violent confrontations among prisoners.
- c. Out-of-date building designs fail to adequately address the needs of today's criminal caseload and result in the transportation of in-custody defendants to the courtrooms through public hallways and past judicial chambers.
- d. These conditions jeopardize public safety and security, undermine court efficiency, and limit equal access.
- e. Population growth over the years has stretched our court facilities to the limit.
- f. In South Orange County, we have only seven courtrooms to serve approximately 650,000 people. Of these seven courtrooms, only four are permanent and three are leased.
- g. We have court staff working in trailers and in an abandoned fire station.

- h. Some of our courthouses lack appropriate waiting rooms for children.
- i. Some of our courthouses lack adequate accommodations for persons with disabilities.
- j. Some of our courthouses lack space for assisting unrepresented litigants.

VII. SAN DIEGO REGION

A. Superior Court of Imperial County

1. Countywide Facilities Issues

- a. Superior Court of Imperial County court facilities are woefully inadequate, and such condition adversely impacts court operations, access, and security.
- b. Imperial County's historic underfunding of the court has resulted in antiquated and nonfunctional facilities.
- c. Imperial County residents are in desperate need of better facilities. Continuing to operate in these deplorable conditions erodes public trust and confidence in the justice system.

2. Main Courthouse, 939 West Main Street, El Centro, CA

- a. The main courthouse is rated seismically deficient, and its original design and construction date from circa 1920.
- b. This facility does not allow for a secure and user-friendly environment.
- c. Our main courthouse lacks adequate holding cells, resulting in in-custody defendants being housed in jury deliberation rooms and transported through public corridors.

B. Superior Court of San Diego County

1. Statewide Facilities Deficiencies

Conditions in the state's courthouses, including those of the Superior Court of San Diego County, jeopardize public safety and security, undermine court efficiency, and limit equal access. Significant efforts have been made to identify and prioritize the scope and nature of court facilities issues across the state.

2. San Diego Downtown Court Facilities

- a. An architectural report released in late 2005 found serious facility issues with San Diego’s current downtown court facilities, including “. . . immediate safety and functional concerns . . . related to the substandard seismic performance of these buildings—particularly the County Courthouse, whose building footprint intersects a surface rupture fault line. . . .”
- b. The report also identified a lack of offender holding space that results in inefficient and expensive security staffing and a lack of separation between the public and in-custody defendants that results in serious security and public safety issues.
- c. The condition of our court buildings will continue to deteriorate if actions are not taken.

VIII. STATEWIDE SUPPORT LETTERS REGARDING SENATE BILL 1163 (Ackerman), ASSEMBLY BILL 1831 (Jones), and SENATE BILL 395 (Escutia)

- 1. Abbey, Weitzenberg, Warren & Emery Law Office
- 2. California Judges Association
- 3. Disability Rights Legal Center
- 4. Mediation Law Group
- 5. State Bar of California
- 6. Alameda County Bar Association
- 7. Beverly Hills Bar Association
- 8. Beverly Hills Bar Association
- 9. Contra Costa County Bar Association
- 10. Desert Bar Association
- 11. Fresno County Bar Association
- 12. Hemet/San Jacinto Bar Association
- 13. Riverside County Bar Association
- 14. San Bernardino County Bar Association
- 15. San Diego County Bar Association

16. California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, Alameda County
17. California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, Mariposa County
18. California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, Monterey County
19. California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, Napa County
20. California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, Orange County
21. Superior Court of California, County of Alameda
22. Superior Court of California, County of Contra Costa
23. Superior Court of California, County of El Dorado
24. Superior Court of California, County of Fresno
25. Superior Court of California, County of Glenn
26. Superior Court of California, County of Humboldt
27. Superior Court of California, County of Imperial
28. Superior Court of California, County of Inyo
29. Superior Court of California, County of Lake
30. Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles
31. Superior Court of California, County of Merced
32. Superior Court of California, County of Monterey
33. Superior Court of California, County of Napa
34. Superior Court of California, County of Orange
35. Superior Court of California, County of Placer
36. Superior Court of California, County of Riverside
37. Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento
38. Superior Court of California, County of San Benito
39. Superior Court of California, County of San Bernardino
40. Superior Court of California, County of San Diego

41. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin
42. Superior Court of California, County of Santa Barbara
43. Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara
44. Superior Court of California, County of Shasta
45. Superior Court of California, County of Solano
46. Superior Court of California, County of Sonoma
47. Superior Court of California, County of Stanislaus
48. Superior Court of California, County of Tulare
49. Superior Court of California, County of Yolo