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Contact: Philip R. Carrizosa, 415-865-8044

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Administrative Director of the California Courts Announces His Retirement

SAN FRANCISCO—William C. Vickrey today announced his plans to retire after nearly two decades as Administrative Director of the California Courts. Mr. Vickrey will remain as head of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and secretary to the state Judicial Council until September 9, 2011.

“Bill informed me last August of his planned retirement. He agreed to remain until the end of the current legislative session. I appreciate his willingness to continue to serve through my transition as Chief Justice. I am grateful to Bill for his tireless dedication, innovation, and perseverance in helping to reform California’s courts and making the judiciary a true third branch of government in this state,” said Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye. “He will be sorely missed and difficult to replace.”

Mr. Vickrey said, “I am thankful to the chief justice and her predecessors, Chief Justice Ronald M. George and Chief Justice Malcolm Lucas, for the opportunity to serve the courts and the people of California. After nearly 20 years, and with the support of my wonderful wife, Susan, I am looking forward to beginning a new chapter in our lives while seeing others continue to make California’s courts the best in the nation.”

Judicial branch leaders and justice system partners were effusive in their praise of Mr. Vickrey.

- Chief Justice Malcolm Lucas provided the following statement: “I have just learned of Bill Vickrey’s retirement in September. The Bible says it best, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ How fortunate we in California are to have enjoyed the extraordinary talents of Bill Vickrey. As Chief Justice, I had been without the help of a head of the AOC for almost a year and we were searching for a person to fill this spot. Bill came along and I hired him almost at once and have never regretted it. He devoted himself to the best interests of the judiciary and was in all ways exceptional.”
- Chief Justice Ronald M. George said: “Last summer when Bill Vickrey told me of his intent to retire this year as Administrative Director of the Courts, I urged him to stay long enough to facilitate a transition to the new leadership of the judicial branch. His 19 years of exceptional service to the people of California and its judiciary is now coming to a close. Bill has very ably served under three Chief Justices of this state. Present and future generations of Californians will benefit from his many innovative contributions to the administration of justice on both a state and national level. I very much enjoyed working with Bill, and join the many persons in

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the three branches of government in extolling his tireless and devoted service. I wish Bill and his wife Susan all the best in the future.”

- “For two decades, Bill Vickrey has worked tirelessly to improve our judicial system and to ensure the effective and efficient administration of justice throughout our state. He helped to usher in milestone achievements such as trial court unification and realignment of court funding. Working with three chief justices, Bill has left an indelible mark on our judiciary and we owe him a debt of gratitude. I thank him for his service and wish him well in his retirement,” said Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg.
- “Bill Vickrey is one of our country’s most esteemed court administrators. He has administratively overseen one of the largest court systems in the nation, demonstrating exceptional diligence and unparalleled leadership and commitment throughout his tenure,” said New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman. “There is no one in the state court community who I respect or admire more than Bill. I wish him all the best as he moves on to this new phase in his personal and professional life.”
- Presiding Judge Kevin Enright, Chair of the Judicial Council’s Presiding Judges Advisory Committee stated: “I have just learned of the announcement by our Administrative Director of the Courts William C. Vickrey of his impending retirement. Bill’s retirement will be a great loss for our judicial branch. His leadership, vision and incredible energy over the past 19 years has been instrumental in the significant accomplishments of state funding, court unification and the transfer of court facility ownership to the state. Our court system, now more than ever, is truly a co-equal branch of state government. Bill can be justifiably proud of his accomplishments, improvements and contributions to the administration of justice for all Californians.”
- “Bill’s family will get their father back, but California’s courts will lose a great leader,” said State Treasurer Bill Lockyer. As a legislator, Lockyer worked closely with Vickrey on landmark legislation to unify trial courts, provide state funding for the courts and make jury duty less burdensome. “Bill possessed superb administrative skills and an unsurpassed knowledge of the state judiciary. He was an effective advocate who knew how to navigate the hazards of Sacramento to protect the courts’ best interests. He worked tirelessly with one goal in mind—to give the public a better court system. Bill will be missed, but his achievements will stand the test of history.”
- Kim Turner, Chair of the Judicial Council’s Court Executives Advisory Committee shared these comments: “Bill Vickrey’s courageous and principled leadership over nearly twenty years has been remarkable. He is renowned nationally as a pioneer in ensuring a strong and independent third branch of government and in developing California’s system of justice, heralded as a model by many other states that want to emulate it. Working alongside our former Chief Justice, Hon. Ronald M. George, he has spearheaded every imaginable important innovation and initiative in judicial administration with the singular goal of ensuring that we deliver the gold

standard in administration of justice. His amazing contributions will be remembered in California for decades to come. Court executive officers across the state owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Vickrey for his optimism, his vision in modernizing the work of the courts, his tireless determination to provide resources to courts to carry out their responsibilities, and his responsiveness to the myriad concerns and issues we have brought to him over the last twenty years. With great appreciation, we wish him all the best in his retirement.”

- Judge Keith Davis, President of the California Judges Association, said: “For 19 years, Bill Vickrey has labored tirelessly on behalf of the Judicial Branch. His efforts have brought new programs and resources to courts throughout the state. All of us who work in the courts have benefitted greatly from his leadership and commitment. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to know Bill, and to observe and admire his dedication to the judicial branch, know that we will miss him greatly. On behalf of the California Judges Association, I want to wish Bill and his wonderful family the long, happy and healthy retirement he so richly deserves.”
- Executive Director of the State Bar of California Joe Dunn, said: “Bill's retirement is a huge loss for the judiciary and the fair administration of justice. He is simply the best public entity CEO in the country. Whether it was access to our courts for the poor, or salary and benefits for our judges and court employees, or building a unified judiciary for the 21st century, no one has been more of a warrior for our judiciary than Bill Vickrey. No one. The greatest honor we can bestow Bill and the three Chief Justices he has served under is to continue uninterrupted the struggle for a unified judiciary throughout California.”
- “Bill Vickrey spent 20 years trying to make sense of the operation of the California courts; a complicated, fractious but vital part of our state,” said Phil Isenberg, Chair of the Delta Stewardship Council. “I worked closely with him while Chair of the Assembly Judiciary Committee, and during my service on the Judicial Council. Bill took on a difficult job and he did it well. He will be missed by me and every other fan of an equitable system of justice, administered by an efficient and frugal court system.”
- “I am saddened, but not surprised, by Bill Vickrey’s announcement of his retirement,” said Chris Dolan, immediate past president of Consumer Attorneys of California. “Bill had, for some time, told those close to him that he was considering retirement but, in essence, the Chief beat him to it. Bill stayed on to serve the courts through the transition to a new, very capable, Chief Justice. In looking at Bill’s 18 years of dedicated service to the courts, it is apparent to all that he, along with Chief Justice George, steered the California courts through the greatest sea change in California’s judicial history. When Bill started in 1992, the courts were a series of local, essentially feudal, county courts housed in outdated facilities. This system was ill-equipped to handle the growing needs of the seventh largest economy in the world. Bill is a visionary who worked selflessly to ensure that courts were funded adequately, housed in safe facilities with sufficient courtrooms to serve the needs of litigants. He shepherded the courts into a unified system and branch of government which not only strengthened the third branch, but provided fair and equal administration of justice. Many don’t know this but Bill worked more than he slept. He would often e-mail at 6:30 in the morning and again at 11:30 in the evening. He testified hundreds of times in front of the Legislature to protect and preserve access

to justice. I have had the distinct honor and pleasure to work closely with Bill and call him a dear friend. I know his heart and his talents have always been in the right place, preserving access to justice so that Californians can have faith that they have a place to turn to have their day in court. While the courts have lost their best advocate with Bill's retirement, his legacy will extend forever in the halls of justice."

- "I have been honored to work with Bill on many projects over the years. He has long been devoted to serving our courts at great personal sacrifice—always with one goal in mind--to make sure the California Court system is the best it can be," said Edith Matthai, past president of the Association of Southern California Defense Counsel.
- Former state senator Dick Ackerman, said: "William C. Vickrey served as Administrative Director of the Courts for the State of California during a time which saw the most dramatic and substantive changes to one of the largest court systems in the world. This included consolidation of various levels of courts, transfer of court operation from counties to the state, significant reorganization of the system, dealing with seismic retrofit and aging structures and seemingly constant budget issues. Working with his former boss, Chief Justice Ron George, the two became the dynamic duo for the court system in the Legislature. Bill's professionalism and knowledge of the judiciary were a cornerstone of his countless meetings and briefings with the governor's office and the Legislature. As one of the leaders who had regular contact with Bill, I can attest to his thoroughness and success rate in presenting the courts views and making sure our judiciary maintained its high regard, quality and operational strengths. Bill understood that a superior court system is the foundation of any society and is critical to keeping California a place where its citizens expect prompt and equal justice. Bill has spent many years to that end and has been successful. Good luck in your next chapter."

Mr. Vickrey has served the people of California as Administrative Director of the Courts since April 1992. Before that, he was State Court Administrator of Utah since 1985. During his tenure managing the AOC, he has collaborated with the chief justice and the Judicial Council on major reforms for California's judicial branch, most notably, unifying the municipal and superior courts into a single trial court, obtaining funding from the state to support the operations of the courts, and shifting management of the state's more than 500 court facilities from the counties to the state.

He is the recipient of numerous awards for his achievements, including the Warren E. Burger Award from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) in 1995, induction into the NCSC's Warren E. Burger Society in 2009, and the Judicial Council's Distinguished Service Award in 1999.

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The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.