



CALIFORNIA APPELLATE COURT CLERK/ADMINISTRATORS

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July 20, 2012

Honorable Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye
Supreme Court of California
350 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94102-4797

RE: Strategic Evaluation Committee Report Comments

Dear Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye:

We felt it was important for the Court Clerk/Administrators of the California Courts of Appeal to respond to the Strategic Evaluation Committee (SEC) Report, especially since we rely so heavily on the AOC for support.

First, we would like to acknowledge the amount of work that went into preparing this report. We are all grateful we were able to be a part of that process and we appreciate the conscientiousness, tirelessness, and dedication of the committee members involved. Second, we think it is critical to document the important work the AOC performs for the appellate courts, and the services upon which we all rely.

Appellate courts do not have all the specialized positions needed to process the necessary paperwork and perform the work required for such functions as procurement, accounts payable, budget, payroll, and benefits. We rely heavily upon the Human Resources and Finance Divisions to review and process all the documents we submit to keep the courts business operations functioning, including issuing payroll and reimbursement checks timely and maintaining overall accounting controls. Additionally, because we are all limited in the number of administrative support staff we have, we are unable to adequately assist with all the education questions and needs of our justices and staff. Therefore, we depend upon the Education Division to provide the required training and support in this area. The Office of General Counsel serves as our courts legal services. We receive immediate assistance anytime it is needed. For our justices, this is invaluable, and for the administrative functions we perform, it would be impossible to efficiently and responsibly do our jobs without them. Finally, the Court Appointed Counsel program is handled almost exclusively by the AOC. Courts would not have the time, especially with reduced

staffing levels and furloughs, to absorb all the work involved with processing, tracking, and auditing statewide attorney claims.

Third, we think it is important to give credit to the AOC's Information Services (IS) Division because they successfully developed and implemented the Appellate Courts Case Management System (ACCMS) a number of years ago. This case management system functions extremely well and provides immediate access to justice to our customers who are able to access this system via the web anytime. Each appellate court has a limited number of computer systems administrators. We do not have network support specialists, programmers, developers, business analysts, or any such positions that are necessary to fully support technology needs for the courts. Technology is what our courts are relying upon to help us cope with the budget reductions we are facing, to continue to provide access to justices with dwindling resources, and to work toward greater efficiencies and best practices. These goals cannot be achieved without a fully functional and adequately staffed IS Division at the AOC.

Fourth, and our final point, the services provided to the courts by the Office of Governmental Affairs, who provides all our legislative information and advocacy, cannot be absorbed or managed within the courts. There are no available attorney positions within the courts to manage pending legislation and the courts are without the expertise to advocate for our needs in this regard. We completely rely on the AOC for these services.

We hope our comments provide another perspective regarding the value of the AOC and the services they provide to courts who do not have the staffing resources in-house to effectively manage the required business operations. Effective administrative support, which includes business operations, is necessary to provide the justices and staff the time they need to process cases and meet our constitutional mandates. The majority of the positions in an appellate court are there to process, handle, and manage case work; a bare minimum of staff handle the administrative support functions. These staff rely heavily upon the AOC to help ensure our justices and employees needs are adequately met. If AOC staffing dedicated to the appellate courts is reduced any further, our level of service will be greatly compromised. If the administrative and business functions of the court are not running smoothly, the processing of cases will be further impacted than the impact suffered already due to reduced staffing levels. We are hopeful we can at least preserve the services and support we desperately need to survive, especially when our resources are so lean as well.

Thank you for considering our comments and we hope they are taken in the vein in which they are sent – with the goals of preserving access to justice and maintaining at least a minimum level of service to the public that meets our constitutional mandates.

Respectfully submitted by:

Charlene Ynson, Court Administrator/Clerk of the 5th District Court of Appeal
on behalf of all the California Appellate Court Clerk/Administrators