

The Superior Court

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF EL DORADO
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SUZANNE N. KINGSBURY
PRESIDING JUDGE

July 10, 2012

Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye, Chair
Judicial Council of California
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3660

Re: Comment on SEC Report

Dear Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye,

As one of the members of the SEC, I debated about whether to submit any additional comments to the Judicial Council relative to the recommendations contained within our committee's report. I attended the Judicial Council meeting when the report was presented by our chairs, Judge Charles Wachob and Judge Brian McCabe, and concur wholeheartedly with the remarks that they made to the council. After some deliberation, I have elected to submit additional comments for your consideration based upon my perspective serving as our court's presiding judge for the past thirteen years.

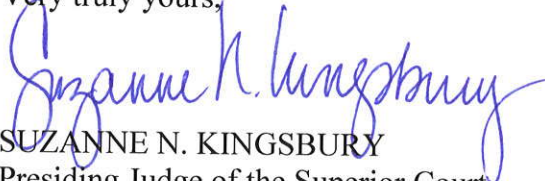
When I was asked to become a member of the SEC, I made it clear that despite my many positive experiences in dealing with the Administrative Office of the Courts, that I would approach my assignment with an open mind. I also cautioned that it was entirely possible that the final report would contain findings and recommendations that were not favorable. Additionally, I expressed concern that too many overlapping committees had been formed to evaluate various aspects of the operations of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

During my sixteen years as a superior court judge, I have participated in numerous task forces, advisory committees and working groups. I was a member of the Judicial Council from 2004 through 2007, and served as the chair of the Rules and Projects Committee for two of those years. I believe that I have a positive working relationship with the staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts and have found most of the employees that I have dealt with to be intelligent, hard working and committed to improving the judicial branch. The Administrative Office of the Courts has provided our court with a variety of services

that have been of benefit to judges, staff and court users. However, with those benefits come significant burdens. The sheer number of surveys, reports and meetings is daunting even to the most experienced administrator. Forms and rules are frequently revised, causing significant cost to the court and work to our already overburdened staff. Litigants and lawyers express consternation at the constant changes and take out their frustrations on our staff. Advisory committees, task forces and working groups seem to have grown exponentially, dealing with a plethora of topics – sometimes at cross purposes - all churning out proposals which must be commented on and dealt with on an extremely tight time line. It has simply become impossible for a trial court to diligently keep up on all of these developments and still serve the public at the clerks' office and in the courtroom.

Every program and service offered by the Administrative Office of the Courts provides a benefit to some constituency. In the process of receiving comments about the SEC report, I am certain that the beneficiaries of those programs and services will implore the Judicial Council not to implement any reductions or eliminate any programs. However, when courtrooms are shut down and clerks' offices hours dramatically scaled back, no one benefits. The Administrative Office of the Courts simply cannot be all things to all people, particularly in light of the current economic crisis. The Judicial Council cannot avoid making these tough decisions. Unless the issues and problems identified by the SEC are met head on and addressed, the Administrative Office of the Courts will continue to lose credibility with the other branches of government, and necessary decisions will be made by those who hold the purse strings. Please don't allow that to happen and to have the SEC's 55 weeks of effort be for naught.

Very truly yours,



SUZANNE N. KINGSBURY
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court