

Item SP12-05 Response Form

Title: Strategic Evaluation Committee Report

The Strategic Evaluation Committee (SEC) was appointed by Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye in March 2011 to conduct an in-depth review of the AOC with a view toward promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency. The Chief Justice received the report and recommendations on May 25. At its meeting on June 21, 2012, the Judicial Council accepted the report and directed that it be posted for public comment for 30 days. Comments received will be considered public and posted by name and organization.

PLEASE NOTE that all comments will be posted to the branch web site at www.courts.ca.gov as submitted by the commentator as soon as reasonably possible after receipt.

To Submit Comments

Comments may be entered on this form or prepared in a letter format. If you are *not* submitting your comments directly on this form, please include the information requested below and the proposal number for identification purposes. Because all comments will be posted as submitted to the branch web site, please submit your comments by email, preferably as an attachment, to: invitations@jud.ca.gov

Please include the following information:

Name: James D. Otto **Title:** Judge of the Superior Court

Organization: _____

Commenting on behalf of an organization

General Comment: Dear Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye, Justice Miller, and Members of the Judicial Council of California:

This comment is in response to the invitation of Justice Miller, Chair of the Executive and Planning Committee, to comment on the Strategic Evaluation Committee's (SEC) recent report regarding the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

I am a judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court and have served as a trial court judge for almost nine years. I am currently the Supervising Judge of the South District of the Los Angeles Superior Court. I have also served on the Los Angeles Superior Court's executive committee. I have served on and been the vice-chair of a number of other local court committees. For approximately the last eight years I have served as a member of the Court Technology Advisory Committee ("CTAC"). Before being appointed to the bench I was a trial attorney for almost twenty-nine years during which time I served as the managing partner of a mid-sized Los Angeles based Law firm for over a decade and subsequently was a founding and managing partner of a small boutique litigation firm. I also have had the experience of being a member Board of Governors of the California State Bar for three years and a member of the Board of Directors of the Center for Civic

DEADLINE FOR COMMENT: 5:00 p.m., Sunday, July 22, 2012

All comments will become part of the public record.

Education for over a decade (including serving as the Board's CFO and a member of its executive committee). It is from the perspective that I am submitting my individual views on the SEC Report. These views are not submitted on behalf of my court or any other person or entity.

First I would like to commend the members of the SEC for their exceptional report and the many weeks of hard work they put in preparing it. While some will be critical of the report as not doing everything that could be done to support its recommendations or as only a beginning, I believe that the report more than provides a compelling basis for the implementation of all its core recommendations. It is now time that the Judiciary through the Judicial Council step-up and take action. It is essential that the Judicial Council establish the policy directives as set forth in the SEC report for the AOC to engage in meaningful and business-like planning and monitoring of large projects and initiatives and that it refocus on its core function of providing service to the courts. Yes, this means that the AOC must necessarily be substantially down-sized with the goal of it being limited to appropriate core functions. After all, such downsizing and even more is what the trial courts are having to do in this time of economic crisis. This does not mean, as some have argued, that the AOC cannot continue to provide necessary services to the smaller courts that the larger courts are able to provide for themselves. It does mean that the smaller courts should have to in effect pay out of their budgets for the services that other courts elect to either provide for themselves or do without. This will result in a rational decision making process by each court of what services it needs given the finite resources available to it. Accordingly I agree with the views that have been expressed by many of my colleagues that the time for more committees, reports, and surveys is over. It is now time to take action and implement the recommendations set forth in the SEC Report. Specifically I urge the Judicial Council to immediately endorse and adopt Recommendations 4-1, 4-2, and 4-3 of the Report.

Specific Comment - Recommendation/Chapter Number _____:

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