

From: Judge Tafoya, Robert
To: Invitations
Subject: Strategic Evaluation Committee
Date: Friday, July 20, 2012 10:58:11 AM

Dear Sir/Ms:

I believe it is necessary that the recommendations propounded by the Strategic Evaluation Committee be followed. The AOC's budget should be reduced so that it continues to serve its core mission and any savings be applied to keep court houses open.

The county of Fresno has closed all of its regional courts to save money. The county of Tulare has closed some of its regional courts to save money. This is of great concern to me because it is clear that many folks of limited means will be denied access to the courts. For example, asking a single mother of three who has to make a mandatory appearance to address a failure to appear for a charge of driving without a license can become an insurmountable challenge for her. If she lacks the funds for transportation, to travel say 100 miles round trip from home to the court in the county seat, or for child care, her problems only escalate

The unemployment rate in Delano, where I preside, borders at 30%. Given the regular increases in fees and assessments that are attached to fines it appears the least able are being asked to absorb more of the burden to address the state's deficit woes. The needs of the litigants must come first.

I have been happy with the services provided by the AOC in the past. However, in these difficult times, it is important that all Californians, rich and poor, have equal access to the law.

Thank you for your work.

Judge Robert Tafoya
Kern County