Judicial Branch Special Hearing:
“Perspectives from Court Users and Stakeholders on Access to Justice”

Judicial Council of California in co-sponsorship with
Hon. Joseph Dunn, Chair of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,
Hon. Dave Jones, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary, and
the State Bar of California

Administrative Office of the Courts, Judicial Council Conference Center
San Francisco, California
Thursday, April 20, 2006
1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

WELCOMING REMARKS
Ronald M. George, Chief Justice of California and Chair of the Judicial Council

INTRODUCTION
Video: “Access to Our Courts”
Presentation by the Hon. Laurie D. Zelon, Associate Justice of the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District

PANEL 1  LANGUAGE ACCESS AND INTERPRETER SERVICES

- Court users and legal services providers’ perspectives on the language access and interpreter services they need to effectively use the courts
- Other challenges to the courts and the public posed by language barriers.
- AOC Court Interpreters Program managers, local court administrators, and non-interpreter court staff perspectives on the courts’ ability to provide the language capabilities needed to effectively assist the public

PANEL 2  OVERCOMING OTHER BARRIERS TO JUSTICE

- How do cultural beliefs and/or customs pose barriers to immigrant groups which are unfamiliar with the courts?
- What initiatives would be helpful to address the needs of immigrant populations?
- How are court users affected by the lack of adequate child waiting rooms in the courts?

BREAK
PANEL 3  CONSEQUENCES OF INADEQUATE JUDICIAL RESOURCES AND DEFICIENT COURT FACILITIES

- How do the need for new judgeships, need for diversity in judicial appointments, and deficient court facilities affect court users’ trust and confidence in the courts?
- What specific challenges do courts with too few judges face in meeting the needs of their communities?
- How do inadequate facilities specifically impede access to justice?
- What steps can be taken to attract and retain qualified, diverse applicants for judicial positions and how can the Judicial Council assist in that effort?

PANEL 4  ACCESS TO SELF-HELP SERVICES

- What do court users see as their priorities for self-help services?
- What service level increases can be accomplished given existing resources?
- What factors will determine how service level increases should be prioritized and implemented?

PANEL 5  TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE CALIFORNIA COURTS

- What can the courts do to ensure that the public understands what is going to or has taken place in court proceedings?
- What initiatives could the Judicial Council/courts undertake to increase the public’s knowledge about their rights and how to effectively use the courts?
- How can the courts collaborate with local communities to improve access to courts?
- How can the Judicial Council help courts measure and convey their efficiency, effectiveness, and procedural fairness to the public? What information does the public want and/or need?

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

CLOSING REMARKS

Hon. Ronald M. George, Chief Justice of California and Chair of the Judicial Council

For more information, please contact Donna Hershkowitz in the AOC’s Office of Governmental Affairs at (916) 323-3121.