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New Cuts in Judicial Branch Budget Pose Grave Risks to Public Services, California Chief Justice Warns

San Francisco—California Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye today made the following statement in response to a joint announcement by the Legislature and Governor about the proposed State Budget for fiscal year 2011–12, which contains deep reductions in the judicial branch budget.

“I am completely dismayed and gravely concerned about how the proposed budget cuts will affect the judicial branch and the public we serve. The cumulative impact of the cuts to the courts in the last three years will have the effect of court closures, fewer services to court users, and the spectre of more furloughs and layoffs for employees. It will affect everyone and anyone connected to the courts in civil cases, criminal cases, family law, probate, and small claims.

“In addition to a \$350 million dollar cut to the judicial branch, the Governor and the Legislature propose sweeping the judicial branch’s funding for infrastructure projects—projects to build safe and secure courthouses for the public. The money will be placed in the state’s general fund. These cuts are unsustainable and incompatible with equal justice for all. This is a sad day for justice in California.”

The proposed budget, unveiled at the press conference in Sacramento, calls for an unprecedented judicial branch reduction of \$300 million in the statewide court construction fund, a \$200 million cut announced earlier this year, and an additional \$150 million.

Last week, 122 leaders of the California trial and appellate courts sent a letter to the Governor and members of the state Legislature that warned of the devastating impact of further reductions to the judicial branch budget at the time the \$150 million cut was announced.

<http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/NR23-11.pdf> .

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The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and ensures leadership and excellence in court administration.