



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Chief Justice Invites Attorneys to Explore Solutions to Unprecedented Reductions in Court Funding**

### **Convenes budget briefing in San Francisco; SoCal meeting planned**

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San Francisco—Twenty leading attorneys from the San Francisco Bay Area gathered for 90 minutes Thursday to discuss the effect of cumulative reductions that the judicial branch has suffered and to explore possible solutions.

Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye convened the meeting to seek bar input on potential solutions for addressing the judicial branch budget this year and seeking a solution for long-term stability for the California judicial system.

“The judicial system in California cannot be sustained at the current levels of funding,” the Chief Justice told members of the plaintiffs and defense bar, as well as leaders of the State Bar of California and the Bar Association of San Francisco. “We are in this together. Many courts, including the Superior Court in San Francisco, are in crisis. We need to find long-term solutions and we invite your best thinking. Many of you have multijurisdictional practices and whatever solution we come up with should be statewide solutions. It’s not something we should approach in a piecemeal fashion.”

The current year’s reduction brings the cumulative cuts of 30 percent to the judicial system over the last three fiscal years. At an emergency session on July 22, the Judicial Council reviewed recommendations from the Trial Court Budget Working Group and allocated a \$350 million reduction by the Legislature and the Governor that resulted in a 6.9 % cut in funding for the 58 trial courts; a 9.7 % cut for the Supreme Court and the six Courts

(over)

of Appeal; and a 12 % cut for the Judicial Council/Administrative Office of the Courts and the Habeas Corpus Resource Center.

The immediate effect of the current cuts on court services varies from court to court, depending on their fiscal health. Many have predicted reduced hours and staff layoffs.

At the meeting, a number of attorneys expressed concern about San Francisco's proposal to close a court that deals with complex litigation and said they would be willing to pay a "usage fee" to the court to keep it open. Other attorneys said solutions should focus on statewide, structural problems.

"We have a short-term problem and a long-term problem," said Joe Cotchett of Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy. "I'm very concerned about what will happen to the branch in fiscal year 2012-13."

At the conclusion of the meeting, a working group was set up to begin examining solutions.

"I plan to have a similar meeting with attorneys in Los Angeles in two weeks," said Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye.

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