



MEDIA ADVISORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 26, 2012

Judicial Council Delays 7 New Courthouses

Delay caused by devastating cuts to judicial branch budget

SAN FRANCISCO—The [Judicial Council](#) accepted recommendations from its [Court Facilities Working Group](#) to indefinitely delay seven new courthouse projects due to ongoing state budget cuts. The seven projects—in Kern, Los Angeles, Monterey, Placer, and Plumas Counties—will be paused until funding is restored or regained through cost savings on other projects.

By fiscal year 2013-2014, nearly \$1.5 billion of court user fees originally designated by the Legislature to be set aside for court construction will have been borrowed, transferred to the state General Fund, or redirected to court operations. This year the Legislature directed that \$50 million per year be permanently diverted from court construction to trial court operations.

“Four years of deep budget cuts to the judicial branch—more than 30 percent since the 2008-2009 fiscal year—have required that we radically refocus the court construction program,” said Justice Brad R. Hill, chair of the Court Facilities Working Group and Administrative Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District. “It’s been a difficult and painful process to freeze certain projects and direct cost-cutting across the board in all others, but we’re grateful for the continued collaboration, flexibility, and creative thinking of the courts in this process.”

Despite having to delay the seven projects, the council was able to approve 23 courthouse projects to proceed as funds become available and changed one project to a renovation, rather than new construction. See a [status update](#) on those projects.

During the meeting, the Judicial Council also approved the working group’s recommendation to accept the [comprehensive audit](#) of the court construction program completed by [Pegasus-Global Holdings, Inc.](#) The council adopted the audit’s 137 recommendations and directed that they be implemented by July 16, 2013.

Other items on the council meeting agenda included:

Council Approves Emergency Funding to Kings Court; Defers Action on San Joaquin:

The council approved the allocation of \$94,000 in emergency funding to the Superior Court of Kings County, but deferred action on further emergency funding for the Superior Court of San Joaquin County until the court reports back to the council on its use of the \$916,000 loan it

received from the council in December 2011. These two courts qualified to request supplemental funding under the council-approved criteria because they project to run out of money in the current fiscal year.

Court Closures: Per statute and its normal meeting procedures, the council received an updated [report](#) on which trial courts have closed courtrooms or clerks' offices or reduced clerks' office hours on days that are not judicial holidays because of budget reductions. Since the last council report, the Superior Courts of Amador, Calaveras, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Kings, San Mateo, San Diego, Sutter, and Ventura Counties have given notice of closures or reductions.

Judicial Branch Education: The council received a [report](#) from the Governing Committee of the Center for Judicial Education and Research, demonstrating how the judicial branch is using technology to make judicial education more efficient and cost-effective by relying more on webinars and distance learning, while reducing the number of in-person courses.

Judicial Council-Approved Realignment of AOC: The council received a [report](#) on progress of the 145 recommendations approved by the council to restructure the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to increase efficiency and accountability; the recommendations were developed by the council's Executive and Planning Committee (E&P) and are based on the report by the Chief Justice's Strategic Evaluation Committee (SEC).

The [meeting agenda and reports](#) considered during the meeting are posted on the California Courts website. In addition, an archived audiocast of the meeting will be posted early next week.

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 promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.

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