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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 2013

Trial Court Funding Workgroup Releases Final Report

*Judicial branch has substantially complied with Trial Court Funding Act;
more work remains for equal access to justice*

SACRAMENTO—California’s judicial branch has accomplished the vast majority of what was set forth in the Trial Court Funding Act of 1997 (AB 233), according to the [final report](#) of the [Trial Court Funding Workgroup](#), which was released today for public review and comment.

“It was clear to the entire workgroup that the visionary promise of the Trial Court Funding Act of 1997—equal access to justice for all Californians—is the guiding mission of the entire judicial branch,” said Justice Harry E. Hull, Jr., workgroup co-chair and associate justice of the Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District. “And while it was gratifying for the workgroup to delineate the branch’s tremendous progress toward improving equity, there will always be more work to be done.”

The report summarizes significant strides by the judicial branch in achieving the stated goals and intent of the act, which fundamentally reformed the state court system by making the state—rather than the counties—primarily responsible for funding trial court operations. These accomplishments include increasing access to justice; implementing greater uniformity, efficiencies, and economies of scale; and simplifying processes and procedures; as well as making overall structural improvements in the statewide delivery of justice. In these areas, the workgroup found that the branch has substantially complied with requirements of the 1997 legislation.

The workgroup highlighted one exception to this progress—in the area of equitable allocation of trial court funds. The workgroup urged the Judicial Council to adopt a new funding allocation methodology and provides criteria that should be considered in adopting a new methodology as part of 18 short-term and long-term recommendations for council actions to improve transparency, accountability, and equal access to justice for all Californians.

The workgroup’s [18 recommendations](#) will be presented to the Judicial Council at its meeting next week. At the same meeting, the council also expects to review a new allocation process

being developed by a subcommittee of the Trial Court Budget Working Group, composed of judges and court executives.

First proposed by Governor Jerry Brown in May 2012 to evaluate progress on state trial court funding, the Trial Court Funding Workgroup was [established](#) by Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye and the Governor in November 2012. The workgroup's evaluation of judicial branch progress on this fundamental and ongoing reform represents a continuation of efforts by the judicial branch at ongoing self-assessment on ways to improve branch efficiency, transparency, accountability, and access to justice. Meeting publicly five times since November, the workgroup's effort was the first ever to comprehensively evaluate the state's progress in achieving the goals outlined in the Lockyer-Isenberg Trial Court Funding Act of 1997.

More information is available at the Trial Court Funding Workgroup's website:
<http://www.courts.ca.gov/partners/fundingworkgroup.htm>.

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