



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Judicial Council Enhances Oversight of Administrative Office of the Courts

Changes geared to improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency

SAN FRANCISCO—At its public meeting today, the [Judicial Council](#) adopted recommendations from its [Executive and Planning Committee](#) to terminate, maintain, or modify specific delegations of authority that the council has issued to the Administrative Director of the Courts or Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) since 1998. The delegations represent the Judicial Council’s authorization for the Administrative Director or AOC to act on the council’s behalf.

The council’s Executive and Planning Committee reviewed the delegations in conjunction with the council’s [restructuring directives to the AOC](#). Those directives stemmed from the final report of the [Strategic Evaluation Committee \(SEC\)](#), appointed by California Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye in March 2011 to conduct an in-depth review of the AOC with a view toward promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

Placer County Assistant Presiding Judge Charles Wachob, who chaired the SEC and is now an advisory member of the Judicial Council, was one of the first council members to respond after hearing a detailed report from Justice Douglas Miller, the chair of the Executive and Planning Committee. “From an SEC perspective, this is fabulous,” Judge Wachob said. “If you look at the whole picture, the mantra of the SEC was transparency, accountability, and efficiency. We’re seeing those components of evaluation of the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Judicial Council, and the branch coming together as a whole. I think it’s exciting and I’m encouraged.”

Merced County Presiding Judge Brian McCabe, who also was a member of the SEC and is now an advisory member of the Judicial Council agreed. “I’ve talked to my counterparts from a number of states, and they are awed and frightened by the prospect of what our Chief Justice has done,” he said. “This self-assessment effort is extraordinary, unique, and unparalleled anywhere in the United States. We are very proud of what has been done so far and are very pleased with the process.”

The council agreed to terminate 54 delegations of authority and approved recommendations that 20 delegations be modified to update, strengthen, or reinforce the council’s oversight and

authority in areas such as finance and budgeting, courthouse construction and maintenance, and judicial branch education.

Other actions taken by the council:

AOC Restructuring: Center for Families, Children & the Courts: The council received an [update](#) on changes to the AOC Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC). The changes are responsive to the council's [restructuring directives to the AOC](#), which include increased oversight to ensure transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the AOC's operations and practices. This review and resulting changes will help ensure that CFCC continues to have an organizational structure and staff that enable it to provide its services to courts and court users.

Judicial Council Directives on AOC Restructuring: The council received an update and [informational report](#) on overall implementation of the [restructuring directives for the AOC](#), as approved by the Judicial Council on August 31, 2012. As of a year later, 85 directives have been implemented.

Budget Allocations for Trial Court Facility Modifications and Planning: The council approved the [report and recommendation](#) of the Trial Court Facility Modification Advisory Committee to allocate the \$50 million appropriated by the Legislature for trial court facility modifications in the fiscal year 2013–2014 budget. The funding will allow the branch to address emergency and critical projects that arise every day in court facilities. However, current funding will not be enough to prevent further deterioration of aging courthouses in need of upgrades to such critical components as HVAC systems, elevators, and roofs.

California's Language Access Plan: The council received an [informational report](#) from the Joint Working Group for California's Language Access Plan, which comprises members of both the council's [Court Interpreters Advisory Panel](#) and [Access and Fairness Advisory Committee](#). The working group was established in June 2013 to create a comprehensive statewide language access plan for California's limited-English-proficient court users. The informational report provided an update on the working group's goals, timeline, and next steps in the development of the plan, anticipating a phased-in approach to increasing language access in the courts based on public and stakeholder input and available resources. The working group expects to propose a draft plan to the council at the council's June 2014 meeting. That proposed plan would be subject to further public and stakeholder comment and input, with a final plan expected for consideration by the council in December 2014.

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