



Superior Court of California County of Solano BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

We'd like to receive sufficient funding to address the closure of our civil and family law clerk's offices in Vallejo, the eliminated Traffic Referee position covering Fairfield and Vallejo, and the two staff who were laid off as well as the three required furlough days for all court staff in the current year so we can reduce the time, often weeks, that litigants wait to process paperwork in civil and family court.

Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

- Reduced office hours of Solano Legal Access Center and Family Law Facilitator offices
- Closed for walk-ins every Wednesday; clients are seen that day by appointment only
- At least 15 clients a day are turned away

Court Reporters

- Eliminated court reporters from misdemeanor cases in FY 2011-12

Counters / Clerks / Telephones

- Closed civil and family law clerk's offices in Vallejo Courthouse in FY 2014-15
- Reduced clerk's office hours by 2 hours per day in FY 2011-12
- Reduced hours again, by one more hour effective 1/14/13

Closed Courtrooms

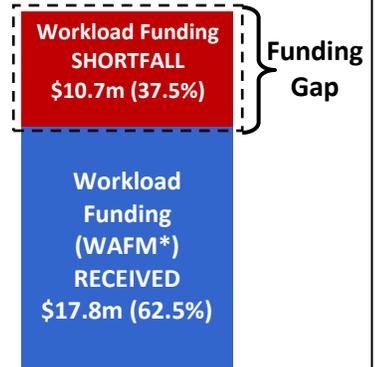
- Eliminated Traffic Referee department for Fairfield and Vallejo, impacting workload of all judges

Staff Impacts / Furloughs / Layoffs / Unfilled Vacancies

- Laid off three regular positions in FY 2011-12 and two in FY 2014-15.
- Instituted furloughs in FY 2009-10, 2012-13 and 2014-15
- Current staff vacancy rate of 22%

Funding Shortfall

***WAFM is the Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology. It describes how much funding courts need based on their workload. In the current year, the workload-based allocation needed in Solano was calculated at \$28.5 million but the court received \$17.8 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



Court Demographics

Population Served	424,233
Square Miles Covered	907
Total Number of Court Facilities	4

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Earl Bradley Nelson
Court Executive Officer	Brian Taylor
Executive Office Contact	(707) 207-7467

Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

- *Staffing shortages have created significant backlogs in civil and family law, placing added burdens on other employees.*
- *Closing clerks' offices early and instituting furlough days limit access for the public.*
- *Reduced staff numbers mean increased errors and inefficiencies in case and document processing.*

The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM)

The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM) calculates the total funding needed for California's 58 trial courts based on case filings, workload and other factors.

To do this, WAFM relies on results from what we call the Resource Assessment Study (RAS) model to estimate total staffing needed using a weighted caseload model. Developed in partnership with national experts, the RAS model is based on a time study of over 5,000 case processing staff in 24 California trial courts. The study established a set of caseweights (amount of time in minutes to process a case from initial filing through any post-disposition activity) understanding that certain types of filings take more time and resources to handle than others. The weighted filings are used to estimate total staff needed in each court.

The WAFM model converts the staff need data into dollars, taking into account average salaries, benefits, operating expenses and equipment, and the local cost of labor using the Bureau of Labor Statistics as a benchmark. A "funding floor" is applied to the smallest trial courts because there is a basic operating threshold that must be met in order to provide service to the public. In other words, California's small courts do not have economies of scale, and yet there are basic expenditures that even the smallest courts must make. The result is, for each court, an estimate of the core operations funding required to adequately process its workload. This is known as the court's WAFM share.

Starting in FY 2013-14, a portion of each court's allocation is being recalculated according to its WAFM share. (A court's WAFM share is different from the courts' historical share of the statewide funding. The WAFM calculation tells us what the trial courts need to function based on current filings, whereas the historical share was based on the amount each court received from its county.)

Unfortunately, the total WAFM funding needed for all 58 courts exceeds the funding currently appropriated in the state budget by as much as \$800 million. (This is the WAFM funding gap.) To manage the budget reductions resulting from the implementation of WAFM in the absence of full trial court funding, the Judicial Council approved applying WAFM incrementally to each court's historical share of statewide funding, applying it 100% only to "new" money appropriated in the budget. New money is any undesignated general court operations funding increase above the FY 2012-13 State funding level.

The rules of application adopted by the Judicial Council are as follows:

- Each year beginning in FY 2013-14, and through/including FY 2017-18, incrementally more of the historical (base) funding (using FY 2012-13 as the base) will be subject to WAFM, until 50% of the FY 2012-13 base is distributed according to WAFM;
- All undesignated court operations state funding increases after FY 2012-13 are distributed according to the WAFM shares; and
- For each dollar of new state funding, one dollar of the historical base will be reallocated using WAFM.