

## **Governor Proposes Increase in Courthouse Security Funding**

By Tina Bay, Staff Writer

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is asking state lawmakers to consider a \$36.6 million increase in funding for courthouse security beginning July 1, according to his May Budget Revision unveiled yesterday.

The judicial branch funding item was part of numerous changes Schwarzenegger proposed to his January 2007 budget in a presentation to the state Legislature. (See related story, Page 9.)

William Vickrey, administrative director of the state courts, told the MetNews that security funding for California's courthouses is "very important" and one of the chief concerns of the judicial branch.

"This is something that we've been working with the Legislature and governor on for the last 18 months, to try to find a solution that works for all 58 court jurisdictions and all 58 sheriffs," he said.

The governor's proposed figure, he explained, includes approximately \$15 million to fund shortfalls in the existing security budget for this year, and about \$21 million in half-year funding to bring courts that are underfunded for security up to "a minimal acceptable standard."

While providing for \$36.6 million in the current year, Schwarzenegger's proposal actually gives spending authority for slightly over \$57 million if one accounts for an additional \$21 million in half-year funding for the following year, he pointed out.

By moving security into a separate line item, Vickrey added, sheriffs "can have confidence that money appropriated to security goes to security," and courts can likewise be assured that money allocated for general operations will go to general operations.

The governor's response on the issue was the result of "tremendous cooperative work" between the California State Sheriffs' Association, statewide court security committee, and judges and staff of various trial courts, Vickrey commented, adding that Court of

Appeal Justice Richard Aldrich of this district's Div. Three and Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca were key leaders in the project.

"All of these things obviously have to be considered by the Legislature," Vickrey said, acknowledging the existence of "difficult budget problems" and lawmakers' desire to ensure that proposed solutions are both effective and cost-efficient with appropriate accountability.

The administrative director said that despite the tentative nature of Schwarzenegger's proposal, he saw it as "definite progress."

"I think this hopefully will result in safer courthouses, more consistent security, with the public being safer so that courthouses can be a safe haven they can come to with their problems."

Schwarzenegger's revised state budget proposal did not address the issue of increased funding for interpreters in civil cases, something Vickrey said the AOC had talked about last year but, as expected, did not make it into the governor's original budget proposal.

The budget revision left intact Schwarzenegger's original proposal to cut funding for Proposition 36 programs, which are designed to let first- and second-time nonviolent, simple drug possession offenders opt for substance abuse treatment instead of incarceration.

The governor in January proposed to slash Proposition 36 funding by \$25 million to \$120 million and require that half of the money be dispersed through the "Offender Treatment Program," a separate funding stream requiring its own application process and calling for county matching.

Margaret Dooley, Proposition 36 coordinator for the Drug Policy Alliance, remarked in a statement that services under the initiative must be expanded to ensure that participants receive the care needed for lasting success and taxpayers save money.

"Now that the budget is in the legislators' hands, we hope they will recognize that counties cannot provide more and better services with fewer resources."

Also unchanged from January is Schwarzenegger's proposal to fund 100 new judgeships statewide—\$27.8 million for 50 new judgeships approved last year, which would not be funded until this June, and \$74.3 million to fund an additional 50 slots beginning in spring of next year.

Vickrey noted that the state appropriations limit for funding trial court operations this year is up about a 0.25 percent from last year's increase.

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