

RIVERSIDE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

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April 2, 2014

State Senator Mark Leno
Chair, Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
State Capitol, Room 5100
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

Re: SB1190

Dear Honorable Leno:

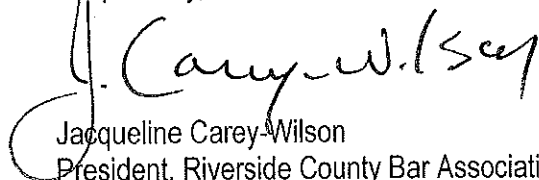
By way of introduction, I am a Deputy County Counsel for San Bernardino and President of the Riverside County Bar Association (RCBA). I am contacting you on behalf of the RCBA, its more than 1200 members, and the many individuals, families, and businesses that interact with our local courts in the Inland Empire each year, to respectfully request your support of Senate Bill 1190. Senate Bill 1190 was introduced by Senator Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) and would fund 50 of the trial court judgeships allocated under AB 159 in 2007 (Stats. 2007, ch. 722). This legislation would provide nine additional judges to both Riverside and San Bernardino Superior Courts. In addition, the legislation would fund two additional justices in the Court of Appeal, Fourth District, Division Two, which hears appeals from the Superior Courts in Riverside, San Bernardino, and Inyo counties.

Historically, the Superior Courts in San Bernardino and Riverside counties have been severely underfunded. The two courts have the highest number of caseloads per judge in the state. Objective and incontrovertible data produced by the Judicial Council of California demonstrate the need for these additional judgeships. In 2012, the Judicial Council determined that Riverside County Superior Court needed an additional 62 judges and San Bernardino needed an additional 65 judges based on the population and filings for each court. These judgeships are desperately needed in Riverside and San Bernardino counties as well as in our severely impacted Court of Appeal. The Fourth District, Division Two is the busiest Court of Appeal in the state, with each justice carrying nearly double the caseload of other justices in comparable courts. Adding two additional justices will greatly benefit local litigants, many of whom have had their appeals transferred to other counties due to the severe backlog in their own court.

Over the last several years, the courts in the Inland Empire have also been severely impacted by the dramatic cuts in the judicial branch. These cuts have unfairly impacted the most disadvantaged in our communities. San Bernardino was forced to close seven courthouses and Riverside closed three courthouses. Because outlying courthouses have been closed, litigants are forced to drive up to three hours to have their cases heard. That means, for example, that a victim of domestic violence living in Needles must drive several hundred miles to reach the courthouse to obtain a necessary and possibly life-saving restraining order. Funding these judgeships is one step to providing access to justice to all residents in the Inland Empire.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully,


Jacqueline Carey-Wilson
President, Riverside County Bar Association