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## **Deploying CCMS Is Common Sense**

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By Hon. Kevin J. McGee, Michael D. Planet, Hon. Charles Crandall, Susan Matherly, Hon. Robin Appel, and Rosa Junqueiro

Some have suggested a "common sense" approach that would end or delay the deployment of the state-wide California Case Management System (CCMS) due to the state's fiscal crisis. The Ventura, San Joaquin, and San Luis Obispo Superior Courts would beg to differ. Delaying the implementation of CCMS does not make "common sense."

There is an urgent need, right now, to replace 58 locally operated and maintained systems that are archaic, inefficient, and very expensive. Further, we need a system that gives us the ability to share information with one another and with our state justice agencies, and to better serve the public so that access to justice is improved, not defeated. Moving forward with the technological advances promised by CCMS now is not a luxury but a basic need of the courts. Let's look at the facts.

The Ventura and San Joaquin Superior Courts have successfully deployed portions of CCMS, and the San Luis Obispo Superior Court urgently needs to deploy it in order to replace an old, failing and expensive case management system. San Luis Obispo, in particular, relies on two archaic systems that are expensive to operate, and one of which is in constant danger of breaking down. Further, these systems cost upwards of \$700,000 a year to operate.

San Joaquin Superior Court has experienced the benefits of CCMS but still is burdened with a criminal case management system similar to San Luis Obispo. Data exchanges to state agencies take place in over-night and weekend batch jobs, and the statistical reporting system is in need of major upgrades that are technologically infeasible. The cost is also exorbitant (nearly \$1,500,000 a year). On the other hand, San Joaquin has successfully deployed the CCMS civil, small claims, probate and mental health modules in a cost-effective way that has replaced a failing old system with efficient new technologies.

Ventura Superior Court's Integrated Justice Information System is considered to be a model, homegrown integrated criminal case management system, but it nevertheless depends upon CCMS as an important next step in integrating the exchange of state-wide and local data. Right now Ventura pays \$400,000 annually to maintain and operate that system.

Our three courts represent a fair cross section of the medium and smaller of the 58 superior courts, and we illustrate why CCMS is needed now. Similarly to San Luis Obispo and San Joaquin, many courts desperately need to replace older technologies that are not only very costly, but also perform poorly and are constantly in danger of failing. Worse, these antiquated systems cannot be modified to take advantage of modern technology - they are dinosaurs. Other courts, like San Joaquin, inefficiently operate two types of technological systems that are unnecessarily costly and need to be fully integrated. Then there are courts, like Ventura, hobbling along with an antiquated family law and juvenile case management system, while the criminal case management system continues to build on its integrated approach.

One system, instead of 58 locally operated and maintained systems of varying reliability, is vital. So is the ability to share information among all 58 counties and state justice agencies, to incorporate web-based technologies, and to expand public accessibility. This system does not currently exist in California. It is the promise of CCMS.

The cost-saving implications for a unitary system are obvious. Together we three courts alone spend almost \$2.6 million annually to maintain inefficient, outdated local case management systems. These monies should be better spent in the deployment of CCMS, which promises economies of scale as it is rolled out throughout the state.

In an era where bills can be paid on-line, every type of merchandise conceivable can be ordered by lap top, news is seen and exchanged electronically, and communication is not limited by borders or

boundaries but only by imagination, the public demands that the courts provide more information and services online rather than in line.

To be sure, we are in extremely difficult financial times. However, it makes no sense whatsoever to keep building, operating and maintaining 58 standalone case management systems. We should not panic by robbing our technology budgets with a short range plan having only superficial, perceived immediate "savings" that will in fact cripple and debilitate our California court system in the long run. Despite the current challenges, it is critical that we keep pace with technology in order to promote public access, provide better services, and produce better decision making.

That is why deploying CCMS now is the common sense thing to do.

**KEVIN J. MCGEE** is Presiding Judge of the Ventura County Superior Court.

**MICHAEL D. PLANET** is the Court Executive Officer of the Ventura County Superior Court.

**CHARLES CRANDALL** is Presiding Judge of the San Luis Obispo County Superior Court.

**SUSAN MATHERLY** is the Court Executive Officer of the San Luis Obispo County Superior Court.

**ROBIN APPEL** is the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court.

**ROSA JUNQUEIRO** is the Court Executive Officer of the San Joaquin County Superior Court.