



NEWS RELEASE

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Judicial Council Approves Reallocation of \$159 Million to Support Trial Courts

Council Also Approves Court Closures of One Day a Month From September 2009 to June 2010

San Francisco—In response to the unprecedented statewide fiscal crisis and judicial branch budget reductions, the Judicial Council of California yesterday approved the reallocation of \$159 million in special funds to offset cuts to the trial court operations budget. The special funds address on a one-time basis a portion of the court funding cuts and unfunded growth costs for court security, employee retirement, dependency counsel, and the court interpreter program.

In addition, the council approved the closure of all state courts on the third Wednesday of each month, from September 2009 through June 2010. The actions were taken at a public meeting here yesterday.

The court closures are authorized by Government Code section 68106, recently approved by the Governor and Legislature as part of budget trailer bill (Senate Bill X4 13) to the 2009–2010 Budget Act.

“The mission of the Judicial Council is to improve access to justice, so it is extremely difficult for us to make any decision that results in closing our courts,” stated Chief Justice Ronald M. George, chair of the Judicial Council. “However, it is important that we have a broad perspective during these times and not take any action that in the long term may be even more devastating than the proposals we are now considering.”

The state’s top jurist also encouraged judges to take part in voluntary pay reductions, since court employees who are furloughed also will be subject to pay cuts. The Chief Justice indicated that he will take a voluntary pay cut starting at the first available opportunity.

All California courts are subject to closure: the superior courts, the Courts of Appeal, and the California Supreme Court. The Administrative Office of the Courts will be closed on the same day as the courts.

The closures of all courts one day a month, starting in September, will result in savings of about \$94.3 million on a statewide basis. The court closures are part of several Judicial Council actions to mitigate an unprecedented \$414 million in budget reductions for the entire judicial branch.

Under the court closure plan approved yesterday, trial courts must confer with their employee organizations about the impact of the court closures, which may include furloughing employees on the day courts are closed. In addition, court closure days will not be counted for purposes of computing time for statutory deadlines.

The council also directed that information about monetary savings resulting from the closures and the impact of the closures on court users, county justice partners, and court operations, be reported to the council in January 2010, along with then-available fiscal information, so the council may reconsider whether to continue or reduce the number of monthly closures for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The reports on court closures and trial court budget allocations are available at this link on the California Courts Web site: <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/age072909.pdf> .

The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and ensures leadership and excellence in court administration.

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