

# SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

400 McAllister Street, Room 205  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4512  
Phone: 415-551-5737  
FAX: 415-551-5701



T. MICHAEL YUEN  
COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER

August 2, 2011

Ms. Christine Patton  
Director, Bay Area Northern Coastal Regional Office  
Judicial Council of California  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
455 Golden Gate Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94102

***Re: Notification of Closure of 25 Civil Courtrooms, Daily Limited Service Hours in Clerks' Offices***

Dear Ms. Patton:

Pursuant to Government Code Section 68106, the Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco, is providing notice of the indefinite closure of 25 courtrooms and reduced hours in all of our clerks' offices due to an insurmountable multi-year budget deficit resulting from unprecedented cuts the Governor and the legislature carved from the judicial branch. The closure of these courtrooms, which will paralyze and stunt our civil caseload in San Francisco, coincides with a 40 percent reduction in our staff.

The layoffs will take effect at the close of business on September 30, 2011. The courtroom closures, which will leave just three of 17 civil trial departments open, will most certainly deny access to justice in the San Francisco Superior Court, effective October 3, 2011.

Also effective October 3, 2011, all clerks' offices in the San Francisco Superior Court will open at 8:30 a.m. – 30 minutes later than usual, Monday through Friday. This change will essentially eliminate our existing Limited Service Days in effect on Fridays since January 21, 2011 by opening at 8:30 a.m. – instead of 8 a.m. – and closing at 4 p.m. rather than 12 p.m. each Friday. In addition to the later opening each weekday morning, the 40 percent reduction in staff also will require the Court to close the Criminal Division clerk's office and the Traffic Division clerk's office at 4 p.m. – 30 minutes earlier than usual. The effect of these changes is summarized below:

- Monday – Friday – All clerks' offices will be open from 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Since 2008, the Governor and legislature have pushed through \$652 million in ongoing budget cuts to the judicial branch. These cuts have left our Court with a structural deficit and a dire multi-year problem. In total for FYs 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14, the Court faces a cumulative \$20.4 million deficit. While the Governor and legislature have approved fee increases in prior years to help mitigate the cuts, most of those fees are temporary in nature and expire in 2013, which creates a structural imbalance where fees are temporary solutions for permanent and ongoing budget cuts with no

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specified end date. Further, one-time fund shifts that have been approved by the Governor and legislature to reduce the impact of budget reductions are also temporary solutions that eventually disappear. The Court cannot balance our budget on short-term revenues and accounting maneuvers while hoping that four years of funding cuts will be reversed. Therefore, it is necessary to reject temporary and one-time budget fixes that do nothing to address the ongoing structural deficit that has plagued our budget for each of the past three fiscal years. While Presiding Judge Katherine Feinstein and I are consumed by the grim tasks of dismantling our Court and preparing to lay off our loyal and experienced staff, we had no other choice given the realities of our bottom line resulting from the actions of our sister branches of government. It is our hope to avoid additional layoffs in mid-January if optimistic state revenue projections fail to materialize, or at the start of the new fiscal year on July 1, 2012.

With a hiring freeze in effect since April 2009, the Court is left with 484 employees out of the 591 we had just three years ago. After the painful downsizing of our Court, we will retain just 284 employees.

The public impacts will be vast and widespread for many Court users. The Court's reorganization after the civil courtroom closures will affect everyone from self-represented litigants who do not speak English but want to get a divorce, to corporate businesses seeking millions in high-profile business disputes, to tenants who were wrongfully evicted, to under-served parents trying to avoid losing their children permanently or trying to obtain a timely child custody order. Many needs will go unmet in the civil arena, including family law, probate and litigation, while the Court fulfills statutory time requirements related to the adjudication of adult and juvenile criminal cases. People who rely on and need the Court to peacefully resolve their disputes will now have a severe reduction in access to justice due to the Governor's and legislature's actions.

It is with deep regret that I provide you with this notification. I must emphasize once again that the judicial branch needs to secure adequate state funding and support from the Governor and legislature in order to fulfill our core mission of fair and equal access to justice in San Francisco.

Sincerely,

/s/  
T. Michael Yuen  
Court Executive Officer

cc: Hon. Katherine Feinstein, Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco  
Hon. Cynthia Ming-mei Lee, Assistant Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco



# Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco Notice of Courtroom Closures Daily Limited Services Hours

## **COURT ANNOUNCEMENT**

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Pursuant to Government Code section 68106, the Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco, hereby provides public notice that effective October 3, 2011, the Court will indefinitely close 25 civil courtrooms and reduce daily hours in all clerks' offices. The Courtroom closures and reduction of public hours in all clerks' offices are the result of state budget cuts made by the governor and the legislature.

**In total for FYs 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14, the Court faces a cumulative \$20.4 million deficit.**

## **LIMITED SERVICE HOURS**

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Effective October 3, 2011, all clerks' offices in the San Francisco Superior Court will open at 8:30 a.m. – 30 minutes later than usual, Monday through Friday. In addition to the later opening each weekday morning, the 40 percent reduction in staff also will require the Court each day to close the Criminal clerk's office and the Traffic Division clerk's office at 4 p.m. – 30 minutes earlier than usual.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT BEGINNING OCTOBER 3, 2011, THE NEW CLERKS' OFFICE SCHEDULE REPLACES THE PREVIOUS LIMITED SERVICE DAYS ON FRIDAYS IN EFFECT SINCE JANUARY 21, 2011.**

The effect of these new limited service hours is summarized below:

- **Monday – Friday – All clerks' offices will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.\*\***

**\*\*Drop boxes will no longer be available. Please note that anyone not being assisted at a window at 4 p.m. will not be allowed to file their papers until the next business day.\*\***

The San Francisco Superior Court Clerks' offices are located at:

Hall of Justice:	Criminal clerk's office:	Room 101
	Traffic Division clerk's office:	Room 145
Civic Center Courthouse:	Civil clerk's office:	Room 103
	Unified Family Court clerk's office:	Room 402
Youth Guidance Center:	Juvenile Delinquency clerk's office:	Room 101