

The budget crisis in California's judicial branch once again dominated the conversation at the first Judicial Council meeting of 2012. The branch is struggling with the burden of \$653 million in cuts over the last 4 years. Governor Brown's current budget proposal calls for no additional immediate cuts to the courts.

Ron Overholt, AOC Interim Executive Director *"Pleased that there was a recognition by the governor and staff at the department of finance that the courts have been cut as far as it is possible to cut us."*

Hon. David Rosenberg, Judicial Council *"Enough is enough. We've really been pushed to the wall."*

But if voters don't approve in November the governor's initiative to raise taxes, the branch is currently scheduled for another \$125 million cut.

Ron Overholt, AOC Interim Executive Director *"We don't take positions on taxes, but we certainly take a position on an additional \$125 million cut that would be devastating to the branch. In fact we need to be going in the other direction in terms of restoring funds to the branch."*

The co-chair of the Open Courts Coalition reported that it has revved up activity on behalf of the judicial branch.

Niall McCarthy, Co-Chair Open Courts Coalition *"The Open Courts Coalition is a group of lawyers from all walks of the practice. Every aspect of the law in every part of the state is represented. And what we've done over the past four months is get together and have a very strategic plan for how to try to assist this effort of getting more funds to the courts. We believe we're just at the beginning and we're going to make much more progress going forward."*

And a representative from the Coalition of Concerned Legal Professionals urged council members to bold action.

James Kaller, Coalition of Concerned Legal Professionals *"What we're urging the Judicial Council to do is to be more aggressive in its approach with those branches of government to not just accept lesser cuts, but really do whatever is needed. And to convince the legislature and the governor that you're an independent branch of government that needs to be adequately funded."*

Council members reiterated that that's the top legislative priority for the branch, going forward.

Another high priority: the Council is on record opposing Assembly Bill 1208.

Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye, Chief Justice of California *"The bill is based on, in my view, partial information about what's going on in the branch. But we're doing our best to educate our*

fellow jurists and legislators and we're finding strong support for opposition, opposing the legislation as an unnecessary intrusion into judicial branch governance."

The Council also accepted a report on CCMS, the Case Management System poised for deployment in early adopter courts.

And they unanimously agreed to suspend the due diligence process on a possible collaboration with a private foundation and the State Bar.

Hon Terence Bruiniers, Chair, CCMS Executive Committee *"I would hope that we can still continue to work with the state bar because I think it's in our mutual interest to work collaboratively on CCMS, but not as partners."*

Council members also accepted the first semi-annual report on contracts entered into by the branch; hundreds of pages of detail.

More information on other agenda items is on the court's website.

I'm Leanne Kozak reporting from San Francisco for California Courts News.