



NEWS RELEASE

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Judicial Council Approves Emergency Funding Request from San Joaquin Superior Court

Other Actions Taken at Public Business Meeting

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San Francisco – The Judicial Council today approved an emergency funding request from the Superior Court of San Joaquin County, which asked for \$2 million from the council’s urgent needs reserve fund to avoid more layoffs, furloughs, reduced hours, and the possibility of additional court closures.

Of the \$2 million funding requested by the court, the council approved \$1.08 million to be used for immediate concerns such as avoiding court closures and layoffs. The remaining \$916,000 will be loaned to the court as a five-year, interest free loan.

The supplemental funding and loan were made to the San Joaquin trial court with several conditions, in keeping with a practice approved by the council earlier this year. Those conditions specify, among other things, that supplemental funding for urgent needs must be used for the sole purpose of keeping open a sufficient number of courtrooms and providing other necessary services during fiscal year 2011-2012 to meet the court’s obligation to adjudicate all matters that come before it.

San Joaquin is the second court to request and receive funding this year as a result of the severe budget reductions facing the judicial branch of California. The Superior Court of San Francisco received a \$2.5 million loan in September 2011.

At a public meeting today and yesterday, the council took the following actions:

Need for Judicial Officers: Approved new “caseweights” for evaluating the statewide need for judicial officers. The caseweights, which will replace those approved by the council in 2001, show that there is a critical, continuing need for new judgeships in the superior courts. They were developed as a result of a comprehensive study conducted by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) with the assistance of the

National Center of the State Courts.

The caseweights will be used for a 2012 report that will evaluate the need for judgeships that will be submitted to the Legislature and Governor, as required by law. They will also be used for a special assessment of new judgeships needed in family and juvenile law assignments in each superior court.

Court Construction: Endorsed several cost-cutting measures for court construction while affirming its commitment to much-needed improvements in the Judicial Branch's statewide infrastructure. The council approved recommendations from the Court Facilities Working Group to cancel two construction projects in small counties and to seek cost-savings on others. The 25-member working group was appointed by the Chief Justice in July 2011 to oversee the judicial branch program and is headed up by Administrative Presiding Justice Brad R. Hill of the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District. For more details, see the online news release at <http://www.courts.ca.gov/16257.htm> .

Bench-Bar-Media Committee: The council received the [committee](#)'s final report and directed the Interim Administrative Director of the Courts to refer the report recommendations to the appropriate advisory committees, including the Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee and the Court Executives Advisory Committee; Administrative Office of the Courts divisions; and other appropriate entities for further study and consideration. In its report, the committee proposed recommendations to improve media access to court proceedings and records, enhance education about the roles and responsibilities of the courts and media, and help resolve media access conflicts in a manner that protects and promotes the administration of justice.

In remarks to the council, Mr. Ralph Alldredge, president of the California Newspaper Publishers Association and a member of the Bench, Bar, Media Committee, suggested that an independent bench, bar, media organization be organized that is not dependent on state financing and that will continue to represent the best interests of the courts, attorneys, and journalists.

Trial Court Security Funding: The council accepted a recommendation from the Trial Court Budget Working Group for \$1.249 million for the 1) replacement of wireless duress systems at trial courts, and 2) development by a certified actuary of other post-employment benefits valuation reports on individual trial courts for fiscal years 2011–2012 and 2012–2013.

Foster Care Progress Report: Council members heard an informational report on two and a half years of implementation efforts by the [Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care](#), which issued sweeping recommendations for reform of the juvenile court and child welfare systems in 2008. The implementation committee is chaired by Court of

Appeal Justice Richard D. Huffman, a former member of the Judicial Council. (*No action required.*)

Financial Accountability and Efficiency: The council heard an informational report by the Advisory Committee on Financial Accountability and Efficiency for the Judicial Branch on its preliminary review of the core functions, funding levels and sources, and staffing of Administrative Office of the Courts divisions, and identification of collaborative efforts among divisions. (*No action required.*)

At a ceremony on Monday afternoon, the council also honored the recipients of the [2011 Distinguished Service Awards](#) in the Hiram Johnson State Office Building.

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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.