

Bench-Bar Coalition
Quarterly Membership Meeting

Monday, January 26, 2026

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Zoom Virtual Meeting Room

Agenda

MONDAY, January 26

4:00 – 4:05 p.m.

Welcome

Hon. Russ Roeca, cochair

Mr. Philip Nulud, cochair

4:05 – 4:30 p.m.

Presentation: Judicial Mentorship

Secretary Céspedes, Judicial Appointments, Office of the Governor

Deputy Secretary Hofmann, Judicial Appointments, Office of the Governor

4:30 – 4:55 p.m.

Presentation: Legislative Day in Sacramento

Mr. Cory Jasperson, Director of Governmental Affairs, Judicial Council

Ms. Jackie D’Almeida, Legislative Advocate, Judicial Council

For Legal Community Updates please see attached materials

Calendar Review

- Monday, April 27, 2026: Quarterly Membership Meeting
- Monday, July 27, 2026: Quarterly Membership Meeting
- Monday, October 26, 2026: Quarterly Membership Meeting

Bench-Bar Coalition

Legal Community Partners Updates

January 26, 2026 Quarterly Meeting

1. Organization Name

CALIFORNIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

2. What has your organization accomplished since the last BBC meeting?

The California Access to Justice Commission (CalATJ) has been working to increase access to justice for all Californians for nearly 30 years. See calatj.org. We do this by expanding resources, removing barriers, and developing innovations so everyone can effectively and efficiently resolve their civil legal issues. CalATJ is now recognized in statute: Government Code Sections 68655 – 68659. CalATJ brings together representatives from all three branches of government as well as judges, lawyers, professors, and appointees of business, labor, and civic organizations – all interested in enhancing access to justice in California. You can learn more about our members at: calatj.org/commissioners. CalATJ's ongoing activities include:

Access to Courts

- We released a report about the current challenges California litigants face because too few court reporters are employed by trial courts. (calatj.org/publications/a2r) One million Superior Court hearings a year are conducted without providing an official transcript. The report described the rights and interests at stake, the harms this causes, and options for addressing it. It has been widely quoted in submissions to the ongoing writ proceeding on the issue in the California Supreme Court, *FVAP v. Superior Courts*, S288176, and in submissions to the Legislature regarding AB 882. AB 882 has become a two-year bill, and the Supreme Court may issue a decision before the bill receives further consideration in the Legislature. CalATJ looks forward to changes that provide access to transcripts of civil proceedings to litigants who cannot afford to pay for a private court reporter. As our report stated, we hope the changes to implement a solution will take into account the views of litigants, their lawyers, courts, court reporters, and other stakeholders. We look forward to working with others toward that outcome.

Access to Lawyers

- Loan Repayment Assistance Program for Legal Aid –The Legislature has authorized legal aid programs to use Interest on Lawyers Trust Account and Equal Access Funds for a Loan Repayment Assistance Program administered by CalATJ. We have made LRAP distributions for more than a year, funded in this way and from other sources,– all on a basis designed to be tax-free to the recipients based on their continued employment in legal aid. Many student loans have been in forbearance status for many

months, and the federal government will begin charging interest on all loans. There will be a material increase in the minimum loan payment amounts. These developments make our LRAP even more important.

- Grants to Legal Aid. For the fifth year we are administering a state-funded grant program providing \$4.8 million in funding to address the Innovation and Infrastructure needs of California legal aid organizations, described in more detail here. In addition, CalATJ has made grants to assist immigrants and other vulnerable communities, such as LGBTQ+ people, with \$4.8 million in additional funding from the Special Session of the Legislature. Our initial report on this program is here.

- LRS/Nonprofit Collaborations – Last year, CalATJ supported the proposed amendments to Business and Professions Code Section 6155. The amendments permit nonprofits to participate in lawyer referrals, under a new exception to the prohibition against an entity that is not a Certified Lawyer Referral Service (LRS) from making referrals to specific lawyers. CalATJ has provided the State Bar with a report that provides suggested regulations, as well as suggestions, and questions for further consideration on ways for LRSs to enhance access to justice for Californians through nonprofit collaborations, and we discussed enhancements that do not depend on such collaborations. Access to Other Forms of Help

- Inspired by the Federal Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable, the State Bar of California, and the Legal Aid Association of California, and the California Access Commission held a convening of officials of California agencies on ways can leverage civil legal aid to enhance outcomes in the services they provide to the public. The convening focused on the specific topics of homelessness, mental health, immigration, and consumer protection. attendees discussed how legal aid can broaden effective, efficient, and equitable access to their programs, as well as potential collaboration opportunities. A follow-up session focusing on legal problems in housing, and services by agencies and legal aid, will be held on August 28. We look forward to continuing the communications among state agencies and legal aid providers.

- With a grant from the California Lawyers Foundation, we have developed a project, “Your Life, Your Plan,” to connect individuals with serious health conditions referred by health care providers to County Law Librarians, and then to pro bono and affordable lawyers to locate and complete the following documents (as needed): Advance Healthcare Directive, Psychiatric Advance Directive, Statutory Will, Simple Revocable Trust, Power of Attorney.

- CalATJ has formed a working group on E-Justice to use technology to serve low- and moderate-income Californians and self-represented litigants. With information about projects and outcomes in California and other states, the working group will propose specific strategies. A possible example is a program for rural “lawyer deserts” in which

public libraries are given laptops and librarians are trained on resources available for common legal problems.

- Following the Legislature's amendment of Bus. & Prof. Code Section 6155 to allow lawyer referrals by nonprofits in partnerships with certified Lawyer Referral Services, subject to State Bar regulations, CalATJ will gather information for the State Bar from stakeholders including LRS operators, legal aid organizations, bar associations, lawyers who take referrals from an LRS and legal aid organizations, and low- and moderate-income persons who seek lawyer referrals.

**JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA
JUDICIAL VACANCY REPORT
AS OF January 1, 2026**

JUDICIAL VACANCIES: SUPREME COURT

	Vacancies
Supreme Court of California	1
TOTAL:	1

JUDICIAL VACANCIES: APPELLATE COURTS

Appellate District	Vacancies
First Appellate District, Division Four	1
Second Appellate District, Division Two	1
Third Appellate District	1
Fourth Appellate District, Division One	1
Fourth Appellate District, Division Three	2
Fifth Appellate District	1
Sixth Appellate District	1
TOTAL:	8

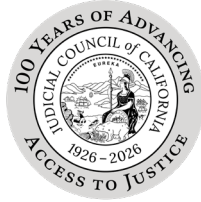
JUDICIAL VACANCIES: SUPERIOR COURTS

County	Vacancies
Alameda	2
Contra Costa	3
Fresno	1
Humboldt	1
Kings	1
Lake	1
Los Angeles	13
Madera	1
Mendocino	1
Orange	1
Placer	1
Sacramento	1
San Bernardino	2
San Diego	1
San Francisco	2
San Joaquin	2
San Mateo	2
Santa Barbara	2
Santa Clara	3

Shasta	1
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Stanislaus	1
Tuolumne	1
Ventura	1

TOTAL VACANCIES:	45
STATEWIDE TOTAL:	54



Judicial Council of California

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Telephone 415-865-4200 · Fax 415-865-4205

MEMORANDUM

Date

January 9, 2026

Action Requested

For Your Information

To

Judicial Officers, Court Administrators, and
Employees of the Judicial Branch

Deadline

N/A

From

Michelle Curran
Administrative Director
Judicial Council

Contact

Zlatko Theodorovic, Director
Budget Services
916-263-1397
Zlatko.Theodorovic@jud.ca.gov

Subject

Fiscal Year 2026–27 Judicial Branch Budget

The Governor released his fiscal year 2026–27 State Budget proposal today. This memo provides a high-level summary of the proposed budget for the judicial branch of government.

Although the economic outlook has improved since the Budget Act of 2025 was signed back in June, California faces an estimated \$2.9 billion budget shortfall in fiscal year 2026–27 and a projected structural deficit of \$26.5 billion in fiscal year 2027–28. While General Fund revenues are projected to exceed the estimates made at the time of 2025 Budget Act, these gains are largely offset by constitutional spending requirements under Proposition 98 and Proposition 2, along with rising costs across other state programs. The budget outlook necessitates continued fiscal restraint to manage ongoing expenditures that outpace available revenues.

The Governor’s proposal provides \$5.7 billion in total operating and facility funds for the judicial branch for fiscal year 2026–27, an increase of \$400 million over the Budget Act of 2025. The funding reflects the priorities of the Chief Justice and the Judicial Council to sustain essential programs and services and lessen the impacts of the state’s multiyear budgetary challenges on the courts and the communities they serve.

The proposed budget continues to support core operations of the judicial branch by providing funding for:

- (1) Increased trial court operational costs,
- (2) Increased pay rates for Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal court-appointed counsel,
- (3) Continued support for Courts of Appeal case processing, and
- (4) Courthouse construction and other facilities costs.

The breakdown of the proposed fiscal year 2026–27 budget for all judicial branch entities is detailed in the following chart.

Proposed Judicial Branch Funding for Fiscal Year 2026–27

Judicial Branch Entity	Total Funding (\$ in millions)
Supreme Court	\$56.6
Courts of Appeal	312.1
Trial Courts	4,090.3
Judicial Council	279.8
Judicial Branch Facility Program	743.3
Habeas Corpus Resource Center	19.6
Subtotal, Operational Budget	5,501.7
Offset from Local Property Tax Revenue	-215.8
Adjusted Operational Budget	\$5,285.9
Less Nonstate Funds ¹	-195.4
Adjusted Operational Budget, State Funds	5,090.5
Court Construction Projects²	<u>374.2</u>
Total Funding³ (Sum of Adjusted Operational Budget and Court Construction Projects)	\$5,660.1
Some totals will not be exact because of rounding. ¹ Includes federal funds and reimbursements. ² Includes additional funding for current projects. ³ Includes General Fund; special, bond, federal, and nongovernmental cost funds; and reimbursements.	

Funding for Court Operations

Trial Court Operations: \$70 million ongoing General Fund to help the trial courts address increases in operational costs (e.g.: salaries and benefits, supplies, equipment, and other services necessary for the courts to operate) and mitigate potential reductions to core program and services.

Court-Appointed Counsel Program: \$11 million ongoing General Fund for a \$25 per hour rate increase for Supreme Court (from \$155 to \$180 per hour) and Courts of Appeal (from \$140 to \$165 per hour) court-appointed counsel. This funding is intended to assist the courts in securing experienced counsel to represent appellants with death judgments and indigent defendants on appeals.

Courts of Appeal Workload: \$5.2 million Appellate Court Trust Fund and 18 positions in fiscal year 2026–27 and \$4.9 million ongoing General Fund beginning in fiscal year 2027–28 to continue to address the courts' existing workload, reduce backlogs, and prevent case delays in appellate districts.

Incompetent to Stand Trial Procedures (SB 820): \$4.3 million General Fund annually for four years, fiscal year 2026–27 through fiscal year 2029–30, to implement SB 820 (Stats. 2025, ch. 330), which requires new incompetency to stand trial and involuntary medication order procedures for the trial courts.

Funding for Trial Courts and State-Level Judicial Entities

Trial Court Trust Fund Revenue Backfill: Civil fee and criminal fine and penalty revenues are sufficient to address current funding needs, therefore, there is no projected need for a revenue backfill at this time. Budget bill language provides authority to request additional resources as needed.

Trial Court Employee Costs: \$21.7 million ongoing General Fund for increased trial court employee health benefits and retirement costs.

Trial Court Judicial Officer Costs: \$2.1 million for compensation of superior court judges.

State-Level Judiciary Judicial Officer and Employee Costs: \$8.9 million adjustment for updated retirement, salary, and benefit costs for judicial officers and employees of the Supreme Court (\$773,000), Courts of Appeal (\$3.8 million), Judicial Council (\$4.0 million), and Habeas Corpus Resource Center (\$342,000).

Rent Costs: \$2.2 million to various branch funds for increased rent costs in facilities occupied by the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, Judicial Council, and Habeas Corpus Resource Center.

Judicial Branch Facilities

State Court Facilities Construction Fund Backfill: \$41 million General Fund backfill to address the structural deficit in the State Court Facilities Construction Fund, maintain existing service levels for trial court facilities projects, and ensure an adequate fund balance.

Orange Central Justice Center—Facility Modification: \$36 million one-time General Fund and \$3.6 million one-time State Court Facilities Construction Fund reimbursement authority in fiscal year 2026–27 and \$35 million one-time General Fund in fiscal year 2027–28 and \$3.5 million one-time State Court Facilities Construction Fund reimbursement authority in fiscal year 2027–28. This augmentation supplements previously approved funding to address cost increases to complete the active facility modification at the Central Justice Center in Orange County.

Los Angeles Spring Street and Chatsworth Courthouses—Courtroom Relocation and Construction: \$10.9 million General Fund in fiscal year 2026–27 for the Spring Street courthouse relocation. This includes \$4.6 million to relocate 23 courtrooms and operations to other courthouses throughout the county and \$6.3 million for a new capital outlay project for the preliminary plans and working drawings to build out six courtrooms, support space, and upgraded holding facilities at the Chatsworth Courthouse. This funding is necessary due to the federal government’s planned sale of the building currently leased by the Superior Court of Los Angeles County in the Civic Center area of downtown Los Angeles.

Other Court Construction: \$47.6 million General Fund and \$320.3 million in Public Buildings Construction Fund in fiscal year 2026–27 for the continuation of the next phase for eight previously approved projects:

- San Luis Obispo County: \$320.3 million for the New San Luis Obispo Courthouse—Design-build
- Nevada County: \$1.5 million for the New Nevada Courthouse—Performance Criteria
- Plumas County: \$2.3 million for the New Quincy Courthouse—Performance Criteria
- Kings County: \$7.6 million for the New Judgeship Courtroom—Construction
- Sutter County: \$6.5 million for the New Judgeship Courtroom—Construction
- San Joaquin County: \$6.4 million for the New Judgeship Courtroom—Working Drawings and Construction
- Solano County: \$5.2 million for the Solano Hall of Justice—reappropriation for Performance Criteria
- Fresno County: \$18.1 million for the New Fresno Courthouse—reappropriation for Performance Criteria

Reappropriation of Existing Funding

Deferred Maintenance: Reappropriation of \$6.7 million to extend the liquidation period to address projects that represent critical infrastructure deficiencies, including the deterioration of elevators and heating, air, and ventilation systems.

New Judgeship Facility Modification: Reappropriation of \$6.5 million to extend the liquidation period to support facility modification projects necessary to accommodate new superior court judgeships in four courts – the Superior Courts of Stanislaus, San Bernardino, Kern, and Riverside Counties.

Next Steps on Judicial Branch Budget

This proposed budget sets the stage for the next phase of the state’s budget development process for the new fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2026. For the judicial branch, this will include ongoing discussions with the administration on branch needs and priorities, related legislative advocacy and hearings with testimony by Judicial Council and court leaders, the May Revision to the Governor’s Budget, and a further intensive period of legislative activity to pass a balanced budget by the June 15 constitutional deadline.

The proposed fiscal year 2026–27 Governor’s Budget may be reviewed in its entirety at ebudget.ca.gov.

MC/ZT/AC