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FACT SHEET May 2026

Administration of Justice Fund

The Administration of Justice Fund allows civic-minded individuals or groups to make monetary donations that assist the Judicial Council of California, the Supreme Court, and the Courts of Appeal in conducting special outreach activities, events, or programs that support the goals of the judicial branch, but for which state funds may not be expended or are not readily available. The fund is not used to finance core judicial functions. Programs that receive funds, however, must directly relate to the purposes of the judicial branch.

Background On The Establishment Of The Fund

The Judicial Council, the Office of the Chief Justice, and the appellate courts often have occasion to organize special outreach activities, events, or programs that benefit and support the goals of the judicial branch, but for which funding may not be readily available.

The ability to produce materials for public education and to host conferences, meetings, or other outreach efforts that facilitate the exchange of ideas and foster relationships within the judicial branch or between the branch and courts of other states or countries can be fiscally challenging.

In 2002, Ralph Shapiro, a California businessman, lawyer, and philanthropist, first raised the idea of establishing a fund that would allow civic-minded individuals or groups to donate funds to assist the Judicial Council and the judicial branch in carrying out these types of activities. Mr. Shapiro recognized that these activities, although not core court functions, assist the branch in carrying out its mission.

Judicial Council legal and finance staff worked, with Mr. Shapiro's support, to create the fund and establish guidelines for its use. As a result, the Administration of Justice Fund was established through the California State Controller's Office in 2002. Ralph and Shirley Shapiro were the first to make a contribution and have continued to make contributions to the fund in subsequent years.

The public-spirited generosity of the principal donors Ralph and Shirley Shapiro and other donors to the fund has benefited many programs and events that support the judicial branch and advance the Judicial Council's goal of improving the administration of justice in California.

How Is the Fund Administered?

The Administration of Justice Fund is a continuously appropriated fund held by the State Treasurer. The fund was established for the purpose of accepting gifts of monies found to be in the best interest of the State of California for the Judicial Council, Supreme Court, and the Courts of Appeal. Rule 10.102 of the California Rules of Court authorizes the Administrative Director or their designee to accept gifts on behalf of these entities.

The Administrative Director has the authority to disburse money from the fund. Judicial Council office directors may submit a proposed request to the Executive Office for use of the funds.

How Are Expenditures Reported?

All fund expenditures are submitted to the California State Controller's Office for processing as they are incurred. Along with other judicial branch funds, the Administration of Justice Fund is included in the Controller's checklist of funds for which certification of year-end financial reports is required.

Current Balance (as of June 2026)

$189,978

How Is The Fund Used?

The fund is used in ways that are consistent with the goals of building relationships between the judicial branch and justice system partners, recognizing the accomplishments of individuals in improving the justice system, implementing education or research programs to improve the courts, and paying expenses related to judicial functions that may not be reimbursed from operating budgets.

Examples of expenses that are supported by the fund include, but are not limited to: printed materials; awards; exhibits; receptions following a meeting; workshops, conferences, or similar events whose purpose is related to the function of the judicial branch; travel expenses for guest speakers; and floral arrangements sent to the family of a judicial officer upon his or her death.

The judicial branch may not use taxpayer money to pay for such expenses. In the past, certain expenditures had been paid from the personal funds of judicial officers or judicial branch employees. The Shapiros made donations to the fund with the intent that these expenses could be paid from the Administration of Justice Fund rather than from personal funds.

Examples of support for recurring or one-time programs

Consistent with the types of fund uses cited above, partial support has been provided for a broad range of annual or one-time events, programs, and activities that have included:

Chief Justice's Civic Learning Initiatives: A summit to examine successes and barriers to increasing civic literacy in California; a Civic Learning Award, in partnership with the Department of Education, annually celebrating successful efforts to engage public high school

students in civic learning and spotlight replicable models for other schools; and ongoing work of the Power of Democracy Steering Committee.

Shapiro Administration of Justice Internships: Opportunity for college students to intern with the Judicial Council, providing experience on statewide judicial administration issues and supporting career paths in the judicial branch.

Judicial Council Distinguished Service Awards: Annual recognition and acknowledgement of judicial branch and other leaders for significant contributions to further the goals of the council and the branch in service to the people of California.

Black History Month Education Program: Speakers and exhibits related to the core values of the justice system.

Judicial Intern Opportunity Program Orientation: Support for the annual orientation session for the ABA student program that places diverse law students in summer internships with judges to expose them to the legal system and to bring more diversity to the courts.

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