



Judicial Council of California

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June 4, 2026

Hon. Thomas J. Umberg
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 3240
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: Assembly Bill 1827 (Chen), as amended March 18, 2026 – Oppose

Dear Senator Umberg:

The Judicial Council opposes Assembly Bill 1827 (Chen), which (1) increases the jurisdiction of small claims court for actions brought by a natural person from \$12,500 to \$15,000, (2) increases the amount for most actions seeking recovery of money, a delinquent unsecured property tax, or in an attorney fee arbitration dispute from \$6,250 to \$15,000, and (3) allows a person to file no more than 3 small claims actions in any calendar year.

Frustrates the Purpose of Small Claims Court. Small claims courts are designed to be the people's court, providing a more expedient, inexpensive, and informal way to resolve relatively small matters. Increasing the jurisdictional limits of small claims court so significantly across the board at one time is arguably inconsistent with California's statutorily declared purpose of small claims court under [Code of Civil Procedure 116.120](#) as a forum intended for resolving minor civil disputes brought by individuals who would otherwise have no other legal recourse to pursue their claims.

To further ensure that small claims courts are best able to provide a simple, inexpensive and informal path to resolve disputes, [Code of Civil Procedure 116.530](#) prohibits attorneys from taking part in a hearing to represent a client. However, well-resourced parties will frequently consult with an attorney prior to their court date. The likelihood that a party with resources will retain an attorney in preparation for small claims court increases with the dollar amount of the case and disadvantages the unrepresented small claims litigant.

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Doubles the Dollar Amount with no Increase in Filing Fees. AB 1827 more than doubles the dollar amount in controversy for money recovery to \$15,000 but leaves the filing fee stagnant at the current \$75 level for claims over \$5,000. Generally, the complexity of a case increases with the dollar amount at issue. This means that small claims courts would be managing more complicated matters that take longer to resolve with no additional funding provided for judges, court commissioners, or court staff to handle the additional workload and no additional funding that would be required to update courts' Civil Case Management Systems, fee schedules, forms, instructional packets, court websites, self-help materials, and updated staff training.

Increased Filings May Overwhelm Small Claims Court Calendars. By significantly raising the jurisdictional limit to over twice the current law, AB 1827 will likely increase the number of claims filed in two ways. The first will likely be an influx of lawsuits filed in small claims court that previously would have been filed as limited civil cases. The second will likely be an influx of claims that previously would not have been filed at all because the value of the case was too low to bring in limited civil court. Taken together, it is foreseeable that AB 1827 will significantly impact small claims court calendars with actions seeking money recovery, lengthening the time it takes to set, hear, and resolve matters brought by natural persons to small claims courts. Small claims court judicial officers report handling already-packed calendars and would be overwhelmed by the likely substantial increase in cases due to AB 1827.

For these reasons, the Judicial Council is opposed to Assembly Bill 1827. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Heather Resetarits at 916-323-3121.

Sincerely,



Cory T. Jaspersen

Director

Judicial Council Governmental Affairs

CTJ/HR/ad

cc: Members, Senate Judiciary Committee
Members, Assembly Judiciary Committee
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