



**NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Council Approves Expanding the Use of Court Interpreters in Civil Cases**

*New funding rules and proposed legislation would enable courts to increase interpreter use in domestic violence, elder abuse, family law, and other civil cases*

SACRAMENTO—At its public meeting on January 23 in Sacramento, the [Judicial Council](#) approved [recommendations](#) that make it explicit that allowable expenses for court interpreter funds from the Trial Court Trust Fund include costs for: all appearances in domestic violence cases, family law cases in which there is a domestic violence issue, and elder abuse cases, as well as providing interpreters for indigent parties in civil cases.

“Every judge in the state who has presided over civil, family, or probate cases has experienced the terrible feeling when we know that we cannot do what is right, what is just, what is required, because the party before us cannot tell us their side of the case,” said Contra Costa County Judge Steven K. Austin, who chairs the council’s Court Interpreters Advisory Panel and led the ad hoc working group that developed the recommendations. “When implemented, these recommendations will have a profound effect on the lives and safety of countless people throughout the state who speak limited or no English.”

Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye, chair of the council, called the action “an unprecedented step in language access.”

The council also voted to [sponsor legislation](#) that would add a section to the Government Code to clarify that courts, on their own authority and subject to available funding, can provide interpreters in civil actions at no cost to the parties, regardless of their income.

Other actions and discussions that took place at the council meeting:

**Technology Governance, Strategy, and Funding:** The council reviewed a [report and accompanying proposal](#) from its [Technology Planning Task Force](#), which provides a structure, roadmap, and process for managing technology initiatives and increases the transparency and accountability of how funds are managed and allocated for technology projects in the judicial branch. The task force is comprised of judicial officers, court executive officers, court

information technology officers, and other stakeholders representing 17 trial courts, the appellate courts, and the public.

The council approved the proposal in concept to be used in support of the budget change proposal process for technology initiatives. The task force will post the proposal for public comment and then re-submit it for final approval at a future council meeting.

**Replace Failing Case Management Systems and Expand Telecommunications:** The council received an informational report from its [Technology Committee](#) on a budget change proposal for 6 local courts to replace their failing case management systems and for 4 local courts to join the branchwide LAN/WAN telecommunications program. This proposal will be forwarded to the Department of Finance, and if approved, would make the telecommunications program that is currently available for 54 of 58 superior courts available to the remaining 4 courts. Replacing failing case management systems is critical to serving the public, increasing access to justice, and improving public safety.

**Governor's Budget Proposal and a Strategy to Increase Court Funding:** The council received an update on the Governor's proposed 2014–15 state budget, which was released on January 10. The update provided an overview of the Governor's proposal, budget analyses done by the Legislative Analyst's Office, and the next steps in the budget process. The update followed on the heels of the budget "blueprint" released publicly at a January 14 [press conference](#) called by Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye. The [budget blueprint](#) provides a 3-year plan for reestablishing a fully-functioning judicial branch and will be used by court leaders in budget advocacy efforts.

**Bidding and Construction for San Diego Central Courthouse:** The council received an [update](#) on construction of the new San Diego Central Court Building, which is the largest current project in the judicial branch court construction program. The accepted bids for the project are approximately \$3 million or 0.6% below the approved construction budget. The new building will replace the County Courthouse, the Family Courthouse, and the Madge Bradley Courthouse in downtown San Diego, all of which are seriously outdated, deficient, unsafe, overcrowded, and inadequate for modern court operations.

An archived audiocast of the entire meeting broken out by topic will be available on the [January 23 council meeting webpage](#) early next week.

*Note: The council's business meeting took place in Sacramento because it was preceded by a day of legislative visits at the state Capitol for council members to meet with legislators and their staffs.*

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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 promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.*