

Judicial Council of California

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PROVIDING ACCESS AND FAIRNESS
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING WITH CLOSED SESSION
(DRAFT)**

June 18, 2026

12:15-1:15 p.m.

Zoom

Members Present: Hon. Kevin Brazile (Cochair), Hon. Jose Castillo, Ms. Shelly Caterino, Hon. Thomas Delaney, Ms. Shirley Luo, Hon. Lia Martin, Ms. Julie Paik, Hon. Mickie Reed, Hon. Michael Rhoads, Ms. Katy Van Sant, and Hon. Laura Walton.

Members Absent: Hon. Victor Rodriguez (Cochair), Ms. Morgan Baxter, Hon. Monica Diaz, Hon. Rebekah Evenson, Hon. Clare Keithley, Hon. Esther Kim, Hon. Victoria Kolakowski, Hon. Cynthia Loo, Hon. Elizabeth Macias, Ms. Nina Magno, Ms. S. Lynn Martinez, Mr. Michael Powell, Ms. Fariba Soroosh, and Hon. Julie Weng-Gutierrez.

Others Present: Ms. Juli Armstrong, Hon. Kathy Ciuffini, Ms. Diana Glick, Ms. Kristin Greenaway, Mr. Cyrus Ip, Hon. Jacqueline Jackson, Ms. Eunice Lee, Ms. Amanda Morris, Ms. Cristina Resendiz-Johnson, Mr. Mustafa Sagir, Ms. Elizabeth Tam-Helmuth, and Mr. Rodney Trevino.

OPEN MEETING

Call to Order and Roll Call

The chair called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. and took roll call.

Approval of Minutes

The advisory body reviewed and approved the open session minutes of the April 16, 2026, Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness meeting. Ms. Julie Paik moved to approve the minutes, Justice Jose Castillo seconded that motion, and with no objections or abstentions, the motion carried.

DISCUSSION AND INFO ITEMS (ITEM 1, INFO 1)

Item 1

2026 Judicial Officer Demographic Data (No Action Required)

Presenter: *Mr. Mustafa Sagir, Supervising Research Analyst, Research, Analytics, and Data*
Mr. Mustafa Sagir presented the “Judicial Demographic Project” to committee members. The project utilizes self-reported demographic data from surveys sent to new justices and judges to report on changes to judiciary composition over time. Mr. Sagir explained why demographic data matters and how it effects public trust, representation, transparency, and acceptability in

California courts. Committee members were given the opportunity to comment on the content of the surveys and methods of data collection.

Info 1

2026 Judicial Diversity Summit

Presenter: *Ms. Cristina Resendiz-Johnson, Attorney, Center for Families, Children & the Courts*

Ms. Cristina Resendiz-Johnson provided members information on the upcoming Judicial Diversity Summit, “Building Bridges, Breaking Barrers,” scheduled on December 9, 2026, in San Francisco.

A D J O U R N M E N T

There being no further open meeting business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:02 p.m.

C L O S E D S E S S I O N (C A L . R U L E S O F C O U R T , R U L E 1 0 . 7 5 (D) (1 0))

Approval of Minutes

The advisory body reviewed and approved the closed session minutes of the April 16, 2026, Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness meeting.

Item 1

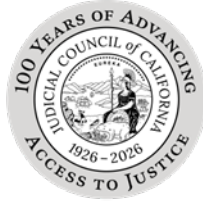
Review and Discuss Interpreter Bench Card (Action Required)

Presenter: *Ms. Diana Glick, Attorney, Center for Families, Children & the Courts*

The committee discussed and voted on updates to the Interpreter Bench Card.

Adjourned closed session at 1:10 p.m.

Approved by the advisory body on enter date.



Judicial Council of California

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 26-036

For business meeting on October 15-16, 2026

Equal Access Fund: Distribution of Funds to the California Access to Justice Commission [DRAFT]

Judicial Council Report Details

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

None

Effective Date

October 16, 2026

Recommended by

Advisory Committee on Providing Access
and Fairness

Hon. Kevin C. Brazile, Cochair

Hon. Victor A. Rodriguez, Cochair

Date of Report

August 13, 2026

Contact

Melanie Snider, 916-263-5442

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Report Type

Action Required

Executive Summary

The Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness recommends that the Judicial Council approve the allocation of \$11.25 million to the California Access to Justice Commission. The funding will support a range of initiatives, including grants to nonprofit civil legal aid providers; support for the infrastructure and innovation needs of legal services addressing civil matters for indigent individuals; assistance for legal aid staff who were eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness as of January 1, 2026, but lost eligibility due to their work with immigrants or marginalized communities; and the administration of a tax-advantaged student loan repayment assistance program.

Recommendation

The Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness recommends that the Judicial Council, effective October 16, 2026, approve a distribution of \$11.25 million from the Equal Access Fund to the California Access to Justice Commission for the purposes authorized by the Budget Act of 2026 (Stats. 2026, ch. 21).

Relevant Previous Council Action

Since fiscal year (FY) 2021–22, the Judicial Council has distributed \$5 million annually to the [California Access to Justice Commission](#)¹ as authorized by the [Budget Act of 2021](#) (Sen. Bill 129, Stats. 2021, ch. 69).² Since FY 2023–24, the Judicial Council has distributed an additional \$250,000 annually to the California Access to Justice Commission, as authorized by [Senate Bill 133](#) (Stats. 2023, ch. 34).³

Most recently, on October 24, 2025, the Judicial Council distributed a total of \$5.25 million, consisting of \$5 million to support grants to nonprofit civil legal aid providers and \$250,000 for administration of a tax-advantaged student loan repayment assistance program for attorneys employed by qualified legal service projects and support centers, as authorized by the Budget Act of 2025 (Stats. 2025, ch. 4) and Senate Bill 133.⁴ A list of nonprofit civil legal aid provider grant recipients from the most recent funding cycle is included as Attachment A.

Analysis/Rationale

The Judicial Council distributes funding to the California Access to Justice Commission through the Equal Access Fund. The Equal Access Fund supports (1) grants to nonprofit civil legal aid providers; (2) administrative costs associated with the Legal Aid Infrastructure and Innovation Grants program; (3) the administration of a tax-advantaged student loan repayment assistance program for attorneys employed by qualified legal services projects and support centers; and (4) assistance to legal aid staff who were eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness as of January 1, 2026, but are no longer eligible due to their work representing immigrants or marginalized communities.

The Legislature has authorized the Judicial Council to distribute funding to the California Access to Justice Commission through multiple enactments. The Budget Act of 2021 authorized annual distributions of \$5 million to the commission beginning in FY 2021–22. Senate Bill 133 subsequently authorized an additional annual ongoing allocation of \$250,000, beginning in

¹ The California Access to Justice Commission is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving access to the civil legal system for all Californians.

² Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., [Equal Access Fund: California Access to Justice Commission Grants](#) (Aug. 30, 2021).

³ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., [Equal Access Fund: Distribution of Funds to the California Access to Justice Commission](#) (Aug. 11, 2023).

⁴ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., [Equal Access Fund: Distribution of Funds to the California Access to Justice Commission](#) (Oct. 7, 2025).

FY 2023–24, to support the commission’s administration of a tax-advantaged student loan repayment assistance program for attorneys employed by qualified legal service projects and support centers. Most recently, the [Budget Act of 2026](#) (Stats. 2026, ch. 21) appropriated \$11 million for FY 2026–27.

For FY 2026–27, the Judicial Council will distribute \$11.25 million to the California Access to Justice Commission from two funding sources. The Budget Act of 2026 appropriated \$11 million to be distributed as follows:

- \$10,250,000 for grants to nonprofit civil legal aid providers, including qualified legal services providers and support centers, to support the infrastructure and innovation needs of legal services in civil matters for indigent persons. The commission may use up to 3 percent of these funds for administrative costs associated with awarding, administering, and monitoring the grants.⁵
- \$750,000 for assisting legal aid staff who were eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness as of January 1, 2026, but are no longer eligible due to their work representing immigrants or marginalized communities.⁶ The commission provides annual reports to Judicial Council staff regarding the administration of the program.

In addition, SB 133 provides an ongoing annual appropriation of \$250,000 for administration of the tax-advantaged student loan repayment assistance program for service providers employed by qualified legal service projects and support centers. This ongoing appropriation brings the total distribution to the California Access to Justice Commission for FY 2026–27 to \$11.25 million.

Policy implications

This recommendation helps implement Goal I of the *Strategic Plan for California’s Judicial Branch*—Access, Fairness, Diversity, and Inclusion. By increasing representation and supporting the infrastructure needs of legal services in civil matters for indigent persons, these funds will expand equal access to the courts, court proceedings, and programs.

Comments

Public comments were not solicited for this proposal because the recommendations are within the Judicial Council’s purview to approve without circulation.

Alternatives considered

No alternatives were considered because the funding is appropriated by the relevant budget acts.

⁵ Three percent of \$10,250,000 is \$307,500 for administrative costs, leaving \$9,942,500 for grant funding. (Stats. 2026, ch. 21, item 0250-101-0001, provision 2.)

⁶ Of the \$750,000, the remainder is available for program administration and, if funding remains, for other purposes specified in section 68655 of the Government Code and shall be available until June 30, 2030. (Stats. 2026, ch. 21, item 0250-101-0001, provision 18.)

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

The funds for the California Access to Justice Commission do not require court implementation because all funds are awarded by the commission as grants to legal services providers. Judicial Council staff will coordinate with commission staff to administer the funds and ensure compliance with applicable reporting and oversight requirements.

Attachments and Links

1. Attachment A: California Access to Justice Commission Legal Aid Infrastructure & Innovation Year 5 Grant Awards

California Access to Justice Commission Legal Aid Infrastructure & Innovation Year 5 Grant Awards	
Funded Projects	Grant Amount
Access California Services	\$120,000
Alliance for Children's Rights	100,000
Cal Collab for Immigrant Justice	150,000
California Immigration Project	41,000
California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.	130,000
Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diegos	100,000
Center for Domestic Peace	126,000
Community Legal Aid SoCal	150,000
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto	100,000
Contra Costa Senior Legal Services	40,000
Counsel for Justice (prev. LACBA)	99,000
Disability Rights Education & Defense	77,000
East Bay Community Law Center	101,000
Elder Law & Advocacy	120,000
Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance	88,000
Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law	100,000
Housing Rights Center	124,000
Immigrant Hope Arroyo Grande	25,000
Immigration Institute of the Bay Area	140,000
Inland Counties Legal Services, Inc.	150,000
Inner City Law Center	125,000
Jubilee Immigration Advocates	80,000
Justice & Diversity Center of the Bar Association of San Francisco	80,000
Latin Advocacy Netowrk-LATINAN	75,000
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights (SF Bay Area)	125,000
Learning Rights Law Center	25,000
Legal Access Alameda	50,000
Legal Aid Association of California	85,000
Legal Aid at Work	105,000
Legal Aid of Sonoma County	60,000
Legal Aid Society of San Bernardino	120,000
Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County	140,000
Legal Link	113,000
Legal Services for Children Inc.	70,000
Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice, a.k.a. Survivor Justice Center	63,000
Mobile Pathways	110,000
Oasis Legal Services	132,000
Partnerships for Trauma Recovery	120,000

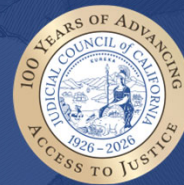
Funded Projects	Grant Amount
Public Service Law Corporation (dba Riverside Legal Aid)	100,000
Santa Clara County Asian Law Alliance	90,000
Secure Families Collaborative	150,000
Senior Legal Services	63,000
Services, Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN)	146,000
St. John's Community Health	73,000
Starting Over, Inc.	66,000
Students Without Limits	50,000
TODEC Legal Center Perris	150,000
Ventura County Legal Aid	39,000
Vital Immigrant Defense Advocacy and Services	74,000
Youth Law Center	115,000
TOTAL	\$4,875,000*

* The \$4,875,000 represents the total grant award after deducting the 2.5 percent allocated for administrative costs related to distributing and overseeing the grants.

Highlights of Results

2025 Language Access Data Tool

August 20, 2026



1

Data Tool Survey

Short annual survey to obtain data from Language Access Representatives (LARs) on:

- Language access services complaints
- Interpreter hiring and recruitment
- Interpreter compensation
- Language Access Signage & Technology (S&T) Grants
- Remote interpreting
- Training needs

2

1

Data Tool

- Helps with resource development and funding requests
- LARs were asked to provide information regarding activity completed in FY 2024-25
- The survey was completed by 54 courts

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Key Findings (1 of 5)

- The number of complaints regarding language access remains extremely low on a statewide basis (less than 15)
- The type of complaints have dropped significantly on the availability of interpreters, indicating positive recruitment efforts for more court interpreters
- Courts are receiving complaints on struggles with video remote interpreting (VRI) implementation, as well as market rate pressures and quality of interpreter services

2

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Key Findings (2 of 5)

- Of the 31 courts actively recruiting interpreters, 97% (30 courts) report an active vacancy in Spanish, highlighting a statewide recruitment challenge
- 29 courts are able to pay at the federal rates for Spanish interpreters
- Mandarin interpreters command the highest premium pricing for spoken languages

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Key Findings (3 of 5)

Top languages which courts pay above federal rates include:

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Mandarin
- Punjabi
- Cantonese
- Tagalog

3

6

Key Findings (4 of 5)

- About half of responding courts planned to apply for the Language Access Signage and Technology Grant Program in 2026 (Cycle 8: 24 courts to receive grants)
- Courts are primarily seeking funding for courtroom VRI hardware and acoustic interpretation tools to strengthen remote interpreting capabilities
- While most non-applicants report no current need, 8 courts cited a lack of grant information, highlighting an opportunity for increased outreach and education

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Key Findings (5 of 5)

- Remote interpreting from county to county remains underutilized, as only 16 courts report providing a court employee interpreter remotely for another county
- Zoom is the most frequently used platform for courts for remote interpreting
- Major challenges to expanding remote interpreting include technology constraints, securing support from judges, and staff or funding limitations

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8

The Data Tool confirms several language access trends and challenges for courts:

- Securing enough interpreters, including in Spanish
- Higher rates being charged for contractors, including rates over the current rates paid to federally certified interpreters
- The need for financial incentives to attract more interpreters to the profession
- The need for interpreter equipment, software, and translation

Summary (2 of 2)

Several initiatives underway:

- **Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program:** Launching additional cohorts to build a long-term employee pipeline
- **Spoken & ASL Exam Preparation:** Expanding specialized training and support to improve candidate pass rates
- **Judicial & Staff VRI Education:** Developing and deploying curriculum to increase judicial buy-in and manage remote courtroom flow
- **Signage and Technology Grants:** Ongoing grant funding available for interpretation and translation needs
- **Standardized Reporting Resources:** To support trial courts with accurate interpreter usage data reporting to inform language access efforts