



Judicial Council of California

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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August 15, 2005

Hon. George Runner
Member of the Senate
State Capitol, Room 4066
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: SCA 16 (Runner), as introduced - Oppose

Dear Senator Runner:

The Judicial Council opposes SCA 16, which provides that the superior court of any county with a population of more than 5,000,000 shall be divided into judicial districts established by three special masters appointed by the Supreme Court within 30 days after the effective date of the measure. The measure also provides that each district must be geographically compact and contiguous to the extent practicable, and consist of no more than 36 superior court judges. The districts must also comply with the federal Voting Rights Act.

The Judicial Council opposes SCA 16 because it would reverse years of recent efforts to improve the public's access to the courts and to make efficient use of judicial and court resources. The measure would also generate confusion for court users and impose a significant burden on court administration by requiring. SCA 16 may also be costly because it may be necessary to construct new court facilities if a newly-created district does not currently have adequate courthouse facilities.

SCA 16 does not set forth the purpose of the prescribed redistricting, other than to indicate election boundaries. It is unclear, therefore, whether the districts are intended to serve as legal jurisdictional boundaries. If so, Los Angeles County court users would be required to determine the appropriate jurisdiction for filing their case, and then make all appearances in that district regardless of whether there are closer court locations.

It is also unclear whether the districts are intended to operate independently of one another within the county. If so, this would result in significantly increased administrative costs, and duplication of judicial and administrative resources. In 1998, California voters approved

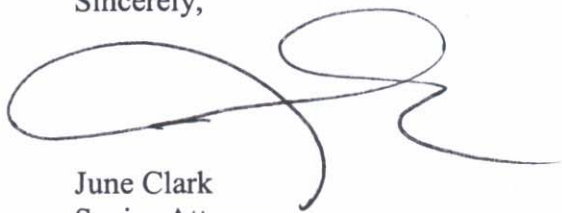
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Proposition 220, which resulted in the unification of each county's municipal courts with its superior court and eliminated exactly the kind of duplicative and costly bureaucracy SCA 16 would produce. Los Angeles County judges voted to unify its municipal and superior courts in January, 2000.

SCA 16 requires that each district must "be geographically compact and contiguous to the extent practicable and shall consist of no more than 36 superior court judges" and comply with the federal Voting Rights Act. Los Angeles County currently has 429 authorized judgeships. There would, therefore, be 12 separate districts required under the SCA 16 formula. There are currently 55 court facilities in the county. The districts drawn to meet these criteria may or may not align with existing court facilities, resulting in the possibility of some districts having adequate court facilities and resources and others having too little or none.

For these reasons, the Judicial Council opposes SCA 16.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'June Clark', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

June Clark
Senior Attorney

JC/yt

cc: Ms. Karen Pank, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor
Ms. Sue Blake, Assistant Director of Legislation, Office of Planning and Research