

Chambers of
JOHN W. VINEYARD
Presiding Judge

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Superior Court of California
County of Riverside

W. SAMUEL HAMRICK, JR.
Court Executive Officer

February 13, 2019

Hon. Jonathan B. Conklin, Chair
Ms. Rebecca Fleming, Vice Chair
Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee
Judicial Council of California
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Judge Conklin and Ms. Fleming:

The Superior Court of California, County of Riverside provides the following comments on the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee's (TCBAC) meeting on February 19, 2019. While these are certainly important priorities, we urge TCBAC to place funding for new judgeships at the top of the BCP list.

The creation of new judgeships has clearly not kept pace with the state's population growth. The 2018 Update of the Judicial Needs Assessment (JNA), a report to the Legislature required by Government Code section 69614(c)(1), shows a filings-based need for 127 new judicial officers in 17 courts. As the report to the Legislature noted, "Without these needed resources, courts that have been determined to have a critical need for new judgeships will have to continue to try to process their workload with an insufficient number of judicial and support staff." Riverside alone needs an additional 36 judgeships, or more than 28 percent of the statewide total, in order to provide access to justice that users of this county's court system deserve.

The Inland Empire has shown a need for new judgeships for a sustained period of time. As the Judicial Council's Workload Assessment Advisory Committee noted in the 2018 update of the JNA, the figures in the report may not even accurately represent the current degree of judicial need because the case weights used in the current iteration of the JNA are based on data collected in 2010. Legislative and other policy changes, such as Assembly Bill (AB) 109, Proposition 47, and new protections for non-minor dependents have affected judicial workload. The expanded use of court interpreters results in better


outcomes for litigants but requires more time in the courtroom and further exacerbates the workload problems for trial courts most in need of new judgeships.

We urge TCBCAC to pursue a BCP that will fund the 50 new judgeships authorized in AB 159 in October 2007. After 11 plus years, all but two of the 50 judgeships remain unfunded and unfilled. There must be a renewed impetus to fund these positions already authorized.

Funding previously authorized judgeships would also alleviate stresses placed on the Assigned Judges Program (AJP). While the AJP is designed to provide periodic, temporary assistance to courts through the use of retired judges, for courts most in need of new judgeships the reality is that AJP assignments are the difference between keeping courtrooms open and closing them. Recent procedural changes to the program were made with the goal of improving how limited resources are managed and allocated, however there have been a number of implementation issues. Funding for new judgeships would greatly reduce the need for AJP assistance in the first place.

There is certainly a need for BCP's that address items such as operational costs, negotiated salary increases, and civil assessments backfill. No one disputes that these are important items. However, a BCP addressing the need for new judgeships should be given careful consideration as the branch's top priority.

Sincerely,


JOHN W. VINEYARD
Presiding Judge


W. SAMUEL HAMRICK, JR.
Court Executive Officer

cc: Hon. Harold Hopp, Judicial Council Member
Hon. John Monterosso, Assistant Presiding Judge