

July 29, 2011

Honorable Steve White, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California
County of Sacramento
720 Ninth Street, Department 47
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Current Budget Crisis

Dear Honorable Judge White,

On behalf of the United Public Employees, Local 1 Court Office Technical Governing Board and our members, I am writing to address some budgetary concerns and to suggest concrete, fiscally responsible solutions regarding the current economic crisis your court is facing.

The deepening economic recession has affected every branch of government, including the Judicial Branch. In addition, the Governor's recent budget has substantially reduced Trial Court funding by hundreds of millions of dollars. Clearly, this will impact the Sacramento Courts for the foreseeable future.

We understand your court will be reviewing the entire organization to further align resources and expenses against the revenue realities of this downturn market. This will undoubtedly involve consolidating groups to gain efficiencies as well as head-count reductions to reduce payroll. While we understand that reducing a workforce is never easy, particularly in the current climate, we encourage you and all other Sacramento Superior Court judges to get actively involved in ensuring those reductions have as little impact on the actual and necessary business of your court in which justice is sought.

Over the past decade, the number of Court line staff has been systematically reduced. During this same timeframe, we have seen substantial growth in your court's administration, parallel to that of the AOC. This imbalance of essential line staff to administrators has led to significant backlogs in virtually every area of the court, and customer service to the citizens of our county has been negatively impacted. As an example, at your FRC facility on July 15, 2011, approximately 70 petitioners were not served by close of business; on July 18, 2011, approximately 55 petitioners were not served; and on July 19, 2011, approximately 69 petitioners were not served. These are not just numbers. This is 194 citizens who, in just three

days out of this month, were denied access to justice. Furthermore, this combustible environment has resulted in immediate and dangerous impacts to the health and safety of everyone who finds themselves at a Sacramento Superior Court facility.

The Court Office Technical Unit Governing Board is concerned not only for the wellbeing and safety of court employees, but also for the public, and for safeguarding the due process and justice upon which we all rely. United Public Court Office Technical Employees Local #1 has historically answered the call to address the court's needs in crisis. Case in point, during the last two years, clerical support staff has been drastically reduced by over 100 employees, saving your court approximately \$9,500,000. Our bargaining unit further saved your court approximately \$8-10,000,000 in salary reductions and salary deferments during that same period (these numbers are reflective of cost estimations provided to the Union by the Court's Administrative office).

We question the operational model currently in use. In order to adequately support the courtrooms and judicial officers of the **Gordon D. Schaber Sacramento County Courthouse**, our members have identified that the following minimum staffing levels are required:

75	Courtroom Clerks
63	Court Reporters
130	Deputy Clerks
24	Legal Research Attorneys
8	Operations Supervisors
4	Operations Managers
2	Directors of Operations

You currently have the following staff to support the courtrooms and judicial officers of the **Gordon D. Schaber Sacramento County Courthouse**:

66.5	Courtroom Clerks (- 8.5)
55	Court Reporters (- 8)
105	Deputy Clerks (-25)
22.5	Legal Research Attorneys (- 1.5)
11	Operations Supervisors (+3)
17	Operations Managers (+13)
9	Directors of Operations (+7)

As you can see from the above-noted statistics, just in the **Gordon D. Schaber Sacramento County Courthouse** alone, you are significantly short staffed in vital and essential areas of the court and considerably overstaffed in others. The downtown facility has 80(+) administrators, and this is in addition to the 37 directors of operations, managers and supervisors noted above. These administrative positions include, but are not limited to, administrative services officers, HR analysts, budget and finance analysts and resource specialists. These positions **do not**

include the administrators that work in the outlying courthouses. It would seem your court is “administrator rich and essential employee poor”.

With respect to these recognized impacts, UPE would like to suggest that the Sacramento Court review and adopt a more streamlined and cost efficient management model, a model which has successfully served your Court in the past (Enclosure #1). This model, with the continued elimination of the 2 Assistant Executive positions, will allow the Court to focus its precious resources on the delivery of services to the public.

We are in support of the position that you, Judge White, and the Alliance of California Judges have taken in respect to identifying and condemning the waste within the AOC. Your call to “put everything on the table” resonates with us. In a recent interview with the Sacramento Bee, Chief Executive Officer Dennis Jones said, when speaking of budget impacts, “...this leaves only personnel to crimp, and that means longer waits for the public.” We ask, by not addressing those administrative positions that do not serve the immediate needs of the public, is this really putting everything on the table?

It is our recommendation that your depleted resources be reallocated to appropriately support the courtrooms and judicial officers conducting fundamental court business, as well as, the support staff that handles the public counters, the petitions, and files that generate workflow which collectively, is the blood which runs through the veins of the courts. Ultimately our goal is the same as yours, to provide the highest level of customer service given the limited resources, in which justice will neither be delayed nor denied.

We thank you in advance for considering our input on these very troubling matters. We would be eager to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Ted Somera,
Executive Director
United Public Employees, Local #1

cc: Court Office Technical Governing Board Directors
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