



Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Judicial Council Adopts Recommendations to Restructure AOC

Also reaffirms Judicial Council oversight of AOC and institutes monthly monitoring for fulfilling recommendations

SAN FRANCISCO—The Judicial Council of California today voted unanimously to approve recommendations to reaffirm Judicial Council authority over the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), restructure the AOC, and endorse a plan for monthly monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations. The recommendations were developed by the council's Executive and Planning Committee (E&P), and are based on the report by the Chief Justice's Strategic Evaluation Committee (SEC) presented to the council at its June 21–22 meeting.

The council's action prompted praise from the three SEC representatives who worked with E&P and who were appointed to the council by Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye. The Chief Justice appointed the SEC soon after she took office in 2011 to conduct a top-to-bottom review of the AOC.

"I appointed the Strategic Evaluation Committee in order to conduct an in-depth review of the AOC," the Chief Justice said. "Justice Miller's report and the Judicial Council's discussion of the E&P recommendations represent the third round of deliberations on this topic in a very short time period."

"Of the recommendations that were submitted by the SEC, almost 1,000 percent were accepted," said Presiding Judge Brian L. McCabe of the Superior Court of Merced and vice-chair of the SEC. "If you figure out statistically what those numbers are, those are not only all-star numbers, they are hall-of-fame numbers. I thought the E&P process was methodical, thoughtful, and thorough. The SEC members were active participants in the process."

The Chair of the SEC, Assistant Presiding Judge Charles D. Wachob of the Superior Court of Placer County, praised the Chief Justice for initiating the process. "You deserve a lot of credit for undertaking this self-assessment," Judge Wachob told the Chief Justice. "When you asked us to

do this work, you made it pretty clear that this was to be a no-holds-barred examination, and what we found was going to be what we found. And that's what happened. And you're to be commended for that. I think it benefits the branch."

Another SEC member who was appointed to the Judicial Council, Presiding Judge Sherrill Ellsworth of the Superior Court of Riverside County, also praised the Chief Justice as well as E&P Chair Justice Douglas Miller, who presented the recommendations to the council. "Justice Miller made it very clear that [SEC participants] were the experts, that we were the individuals to go to [answer] questions," Judge Ellsworth said.

The council also adopted a timeline for implementation of the structural changes for the AOC and directed the Administrative Director of the Courts to keep E&P informed so that it can report implementation progress to the council.

"We expect to report progress on the recommendations each time the Council meets," said Justice Douglas Miller, E&P chair. "We also expect the Chief's self-assessment of both the Judicial Council and the AOC to be an ongoing one. I am thrilled to be part of this historic process."

At the council meeting, Incoming Administrative Director of the Courts Judge Steven Jahr, and Interim Administrative Director of the Courts Jody Patel, discussed the proposed restructuring of the AOC and details of the proposed changes to the Executive Office, which currently includes 14 senior executives. The council approved a recommendation that changes the Executive Office to four positions: the Administrative Director of the Courts, Chief of Staff, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Administrative Officer. The existing divisions will now be offices, and the existing division directors will report to the new Executive Office staff. The Executive Office structure will be implemented October 1, 2012. Judge Jahr takes over his duties on October 9.

Another significant structural change affects the Office of Court Construction and Management, which handles both court construction and court maintenance. The change was endorsed by Justice Brad Hill, who chairs the Court Facilities Working Group, which oversees the facilities program.

"I fully support, and the executive committee of the Court Facilities Working Group also fully supports, separating the court construction and maintenance programs," Justice Hill said. "We believe it will be extremely beneficial to both programs, which are separate and distinct. It will assure that full attention be given to each. We also believe that the maintenance program should have active oversight by judges and court executive officers through what is now the Trial Court Facility Modification Working Group. We see these as timely proposals and necessary reforms."

The council approved both the recommendation to restructure the facilities office, as well as broadening the charge of the Facility Modification Working Group to include court maintenance.

During the discussion about the E&P recommendations, a number of council members referred back to remarks made by Supreme Court Associate Justice Carol Corrigan, who spoke about the recommendations during the public comment period:

“I suggest that today we should agree to turn a page. While we can learn from our history, we cannot change it. While we cannot change our history, we can, and must, responsibly guide our future. Oh sure, we can continue to look backward, focus on blame and nurse our grudges. We can talk at each other rather than speak with each other. Or we can take a deep breath; remember that we are professionals, entrusted with substantial responsibilities; and resolve to work together as partners, rather than fight as adversaries. To reason, rather than demand; to discern, rather than dictate.” The full version of her remarks can be heard and read [here](#).

In other Judicial Council business:

- Established a process and criteria for allocating 2% state-level reserve funding. The council approved the Trial Court Budget Working Group’s recommendations regarding the process and criteria for trial courts to apply for reserve funding.
- Approved recommendations from its Trial Court Budget Working Group on funding for various statewide programs that provide technology and administrative support for trial courts, support access to justice, and reimburse courts for miscellaneous court operation costs.
- Approved budget change proposals for the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, Judicial Council/AOC, Judicial Branch Facility Program, and the trial courts.
- Directed staff of the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care to seek outside funding, including private foundation funding, for a statewide summit on truancy and school discipline. <http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/jc-20120831-itemK.pdf>

Judicial Council meeting agendas and reports are posted on the California Courts public website: www.courts.ca.gov/jcmeetings.htm.

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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.