



NEWS RELEASE

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LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT ANNOUNCES BUDGET CUTS AFFECTING 431 EMPLOYEES

Los Angeles Superior Court Presiding Judge Lee Smalley Edmon announces that "Tomorrow 431 court employees will be adversely affected as reductions in state financial support for the California judicial branch force us to cut our budget by \$30 million."

These actions will affect nearly 1 of every 10 employees of LASC, the largest trial court in the nation.

"This is the unfortunate human impact of the need to reduce our spending by \$30 million," said Presiding Judge Lee Smalley Edmon. "We are laying off people who are committed to serving the public. It is a terrible loss both to these dedicated employees and to the public."

The latest cuts are part of an ongoing series of reductions that began in April of 2010 and that will continue. The reductions made to date already saved \$70 million. The current actions will save another \$30 million. Despite these cuts, the Court faces future additional shortfalls as more reductions in state support for the trial courts are proposed for the Fiscal Year 2012-13 budget.

As of this writing, the state budget is not yet finished, but the Governor's May Revision proposes to reduce judicial branch funding by another \$544 million, and to eliminate the ability of the courts to use or maintain reserves as bridge funding to delay the impacts of cuts. LASC will likely face additional mandatory reductions of more than \$40 million during the next fiscal year.

"Because the California trial courts are state funded, our Court has become a casualty of the state budget crisis," noted Edmon. "We have blunted the impacts of the cuts through the use of locally held reserves," said Edmon. "But we cannot do that

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indefinitely – especially if those reserves are swept, as is being considered in the current budget talks. Our Court is in the midst of a series of painful and wrenching reductions that must ultimately bring services in line with significant reductions in state funding.”

According to Assistant Presiding Judge David Wesley, “There will be more cuts next year, and their impacts will be severe. The current cuts already affect the core work of court – the judge in the courtroom – while significant budget shortfalls remain. Given the significance of our responsibilities to protect public safety and children, the next round of reductions will further limit our ability to hear civil cases.”

Across-the-board cuts will eliminate **341(corrected)** positions in four areas, totaling \$30 million in ongoing savings:

- Eliminating courtroom staffing in 56 courtrooms will save \$6.8 million, a change that affects courtrooms in civil (24 courtrooms affected), criminal (24), family law (3), probate (1) and juvenile (4). The changes to the affected courtrooms have been underway for the past several weeks; they are already being felt across the county.
- Eliminating the Court’s innovative Informal Juvenile Traffic courts will save \$4.8 million and will result in the closure of 11 additional courtrooms.
- Reducing court reporter services will save \$10.3 million. These changes began affecting civil courtrooms on May 15, when court-employed reporters were no longer available for civil trials.
- Eliminating 110 management, clerical and administrative positions outside of the courtrooms will save \$8.2 million. These impacts will be felt across the Court, from clerk’s windows across the county, to central administrative functions.

Altogether, these cuts will impact 431 court staff:

- 157 people are being laid off,
- 108 people will lose 40% of their salaries when they are moved to a three-day-per-week schedule,
- 86 people will lose between 5% and 40% of their salary when they are reclassified to lower-level positions,
- 80 people are being transferred to new jobs, and typically new locations, because their old jobs have been eliminated.

Notices to affected employees are being hand-delivered tomorrow. Those laid off will be

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given two weeks' paid administrative leave, during which time they may attend Court-provided workshops on post-employment benefit issues.

By tomorrow, the LASC will have reduced the number of budgeted positions by 23% since 2002.

"We are in the midst of a fundamental restructuring of the California courts," notes John A. Clarke, the Executive Officer and Clerk of Court. "But the final outcome is difficult to manage, and impossible to predict, due to the speed and severity of the budget cuts being forced upon us.

"Legislators and the Governor are restructuring how California addresses corrections, public education, and welfare and health services. Our court is swept up in these catastrophic changes," said Clarke. "The commitment of our judicial officers and staff to preserve access to justice is unwavering, but our ability to follow through on that commitment may soon be exhausted," he said.

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