



NEWS RELEASE

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San Bernardino Superior Court Announces a Plan to Temporarily Maintain One Courtroom in Barstow, California

On December 11, 2012, the San Bernardino Superior Court announced a second phase of cost reduction measures needed to partially address a significant funding shortfall that faces the Court, resulting from successive years of large cuts to court funding statewide. These measures include the closure of the Barstow courthouse by May 6, 2013, among various other difficult actions.

The most regrettable impact of these closures will be to substantially reduce the availability of courts for populations of residents who live in areas that are distant from remaining courthouses, with many to be facing car travel of up to two hours and forty five minutes each way. Many of these residents are financially disadvantaged, and public transportation options for them range from very limited to non-existent.

Following the announcement of the plan to close the courthouses, Court leaders engaged state and local government leaders, regional bar groups, and others in an attempt to find solutions that could mitigate some of the serious impacts to county residents that these closures will result in.

On March 15 of this year, the Judicial Council distributed unused monies from a 2% statewide reserve to courts throughout the state. Of this amount, San Bernardino Superior Court is scheduled to receive approximately \$1.2 million. This funding is one-time only and does not provide the Court any relief toward a projected ongoing shortfall in excess of \$10 million per year, beginning in fiscal year 2014-2015. The monies can be used now, though, to mitigate, on a temporary basis, some of the impacts of the announced court closures on these communities.

Consequently, the Court today announces a plan to maintain in operation one courtroom in Barstow, three days per week, beginning May 6, 2013. This action will allow traffic, landlord-tenant, small claims and domestic violence cases to continue to be heard at this location. Civil, family law, and criminal cases will still be transferred to other locations, consistent with current plans. The Court intends to keep this courtroom operational through June 21, 2014, barring any unforeseen additional reductions. Because the Court projects a significant deficit after that date, though, the Court will not be able to continue to operate in Barstow after that time, without identifying additional funding solutions.

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During the next 15 months, court leaders will continue to partner with city and county officials, and work with state judicial, legislative, and executive branch leaders to identify funding solutions sufficient to maintain appropriate levels of operations available to all of our communities on an ongoing basis. "The Court is receiving tremendous support from California's Chief Justice, local legislative members, members of the County Board of Supervisors, and local mayors, regarding this issue, and we are hopeful that permanent solutions will be identified," said Marsha Slough, Presiding Judge of the San Bernardino County Superior Court.

"We must do all in our power to prevent whole communities from being effectively disenfranchised from participation in the court system. The Court has an opportunity to keep some doors open and we are doing it," said Judge Slough.

"Our state's trial court system overall is reeling from several years of deep budget reductions. These cuts fall particularly hard on the people served by the most under-resourced courts, such as in San Bernardino. We are encouraged by progress being made at the state level to develop a more equitable funding model among California's courts, which would provide some relief if implemented. We are also hopeful that improved state revenues will allow the Legislature to address funding shortfalls facing all of California's courts," said Stephen Nash, Court Executive Officer.

On a related note, the Court is also announcing that it will maintain juvenile delinquency court, including delinquency drug court in the Victorville courthouse three days a week, effective May 6, 2013. The Court intends to keep this juvenile delinquency courtroom operational three days a week through June 28, 2014, barring any unforeseen additional reductions.

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