



Judicial Council of California

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CIRCULATING ORDER MEMORANDUM TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Circulating Order Number: CO-26-01

Title

Trial Court Budget: Court Interpreters
Program Fiscal Year 2025–26 Midyear
Reallocation and Augmentation

Action Requested

VOTING MEMBERS ONLY: Submit votes
by responding to the transmittal email.

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

None

Please Respond By

March 19, 2026

Recommended by

Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee
Hon. Jonathan B. Conklin, Chair
Ms. Rebecca Fleming, Vice-Chair

Date of Report

March 16, 2026

Contact

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California Rules of Court, rules 10.5(h) and 10.13(d) allow the Judicial Council to act on business between meetings, including urgent matters, by circulating order. This memorandum is not a Judicial Council meeting; circulating orders are conducted via electronic communications. Prior public notice of a proposed circulating order is not required.

Executive Summary

The Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee recommends a midyear reallocation of approximately \$59,000 and an augmentation of \$19.1 million for Court Interpreters Program funding in the Trial Court Trust Fund for fiscal year 2025–26 to address anticipated funding shortfalls due to increasing interpreter costs and expenses. High rates charged by independent contractors are among several factors that have led to the recent marked increase in court interpreter expenses. The allocations will help maintain the current levels of interpreter services for court users.

Recommendation

The Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council, effective March 19, 2026, approve the fiscal year 2025–26 midyear reallocation of \$59,000 and

augmentation of \$19.1 million from the remaining \$27.8 million Court Interpreters Program savings balance.

Relevant Previous Council Action

With the adoption of the Judicial Council's *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts* in 2015, the council has approved budget change proposals to augment the Court Interpreters Program (CIP) to support expansion of interpreter services to all case types.¹ Expenditure increases in the CIP are a result of multiple factors, including increased usage of contractors, high contractor rates, wage growth on ratified agreements, merit salary adjustments, increases in the number of mandated staff interpreters and mandated contractor usage, and expansion of interpreter services to all case types. Courts have reported that many contractors are requesting rates that exceed the council's standard rates for contractors² and are commensurate with current federal rates.

Before fiscal year (FY) 2020–21, trial courts were reimbursed for all eligible court interpreter expenses. Effective July 1, 2022, the Judicial Council approved Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee (TCBAC) recommendations for an ongoing workload-based allocation methodology for CIP funding, including cross-assignments, benefit cost changes, and unspent funds.³ The change from a reimbursement model to an allocation methodology recognized the need to address insufficient funding to reimburse trial courts based on actual expenditures. The council's approved allocation methodology is based on the three-year average expenditure data, excluding FY 2020–21 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At its business meeting on February 21, 2025, the council approved the TCBAC recommendation to use program savings of \$4.6 million to address the shortfall in FY 2023–24.⁴ The allocation for the \$4.6 million augmentation for the current year was approved by the Department of Finance and the Legislature. At the same meeting, the council also approved a midyear allocation of CIP fund balance from the Trial Court Trust Fund (TCTF) to courts to address any anticipated CIP shortfalls for FY 2024–25 and FY 2025–26, based on available program savings. Additionally, the council directed Judicial Council staff to continue to monitor CIP funding and program expenditures, provide regular updates to TCBAC to report any changes, and work with the trial courts to develop a funding request for additional CIP resources beginning in FY 2026–27.

¹ Available at languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2024-01/CLASP_report_060514.pdf.

² *Payment Policies for Independent Contractor Interpreters* (eff. July 1, 2021), courts.ca.gov/documents/CIP-Payment-Policies-for-Independent-Contractor-Interpreters.pdf.

³ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Allocations and Reimbursements to Trial Courts: Court Interpreters Program Funding and Allocation Methodology* (Dec. 14, 2022), jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11533862&GUID=BF5043BE-FE6C-4464-B2CE-336C36D5DB40.

⁴ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Trial Court Budget: Use of Court Interpreters Program Savings to Augment 2024–25 and 2025–26 Allocations for Trial Courts* (Jan. 24, 2025), jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13703531&GUID=E64FD46A-FE23-43D7-BADA-96EA524836B2.

At its business meeting on April 25, 2025, the council approved the TCBAC recommendation for an FY 2024–25 midyear reallocation of \$637,000 and augmentation of \$11.6 million from the remaining savings balance.⁵ The \$11.6 million augmentation was also approved by the Department of Finance and the Legislature. At the same meeting, the council also directed council staff to conduct an additional survey before the end of FY 2024–25 to reallocate available savings to those courts with a funding shortfall based on final expenditures for the current year. Finally, the council directed council staff to repeat the midyear survey and reallocation process in FY 2025–26 and determine whether the trial courts needed additional funding from the remaining program savings balance of \$18.8 million to support court interpreter services.

In July 2025, the council approved FY 2025–26 funding from the TCTF to the trial courts, including the annual allocations from the CIP for court interpreter expenditures.⁶ The recommendations in this report were presented to the Judicial Branch Budget Committee on February 19, 2026, and approved for consideration by the Judicial Council.

Analysis/Rationale

The court interpreter expenditures exceeded the appropriation from FY 2015–16 through FY 2018–19. This was due to the expansion of court interpreter services to include civil cases, which began in the superior courts in FY 2014–15, as prioritized by Assembly Bill 1657 (Stats. 2014, ch. 721) and the creation of Evidence Code section 756.

Beginning in FY 2019–20, expenditures for the CIP were below the appropriation for several years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting reduction in case filings, leading to \$35 million in cumulative program savings as of June 30, 2024. In FY 2023–24, however, due to increased interpreter costs, program expenditures once again exceeded the appropriation by approximately \$4.6 million.

The *Trial Court Interpreters Program Expenditure Report for Fiscal Year 2023–24*, as required by the Budget Act of 2023, found that contract interpreter expenditures in FY 2023–24 represented 34.6 percent of total expenditures, reflecting an increase from FY 2022–23, when contractor expenses were 26.7 percent of the total expenditures (see the expenditure report, Table 4).⁷ Compared to FY 2022–23, expenditures for contract interpreters in FY 2023–24

⁵ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Trial Court Budget: Court Interpreters Program Fiscal Year 2024–25 Midyear Reallocation and Augmentation* (Mar. 28, 2025), jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=14011686&GUID=1FE5BD1D-7EAB-4D89-83AC-08336557D1D1.

⁶ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Trial Court Budget: Allocations from the Trial Court Trust Fund and Trial Court Allocations for Fiscal Year 2025–26* (June 24, 2025), jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=14317995&GUID=ECD8C9DA-C4D0-4251-9D6E-F59B81DF112E.

⁷ *Trial Court Interpreters Program Expenditure Report for Fiscal Year 2023–24* (June 2025), languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/system/files/2025-07/Trial%20Court%20Interpreters%20Program%20Expenditure%20Report%20for%20FY%202023-24.pdf.

increased by \$14.1 million, and expenditures for court employees in FY 2022–23 decreased by \$2.2 million. (*Ibid.*)

In November 2025, council staff sent out a midyear survey to the 58 trial courts to obtain their anticipated additional funding requests for FY 2025–26. The courts based their funding requests and projections on expenditure information from the Phoenix Financial System (through October 31, 2025). The courts’ midyear survey responses are included in Attachment A.

A total of 36 courts requested additional funding totaling \$19.2 million, 22 courts requested no additional funding, and 3 courts estimated unspent funding of approximately \$59,000 in FY 2025–26. After reallocation of the available \$59,000, the CIP augmentation request from the TCTF program reserves is \$19.1 million based on the survey data.

Table 1 demonstrates the current program savings balance of \$27.8 million and the requested \$19.1 million augmentation, which will bring the program savings balance to \$8.7 million at the end of FY 2025–26. Following the distribution of the FY 2025–26 midyear augmentation of \$19.1 million, the remaining program savings balance of \$8.7 million is available for FY 2026–27.

The appropriation for FY 2026–27 is anticipated to be \$135.1 million.⁸ When including savings, the total funding available for FY 2026–27 is estimated at \$143.8 million (\$135.1 million plus \$8.7 million in savings). Based on current expenditure trends, it is anticipated that the full amount of \$143.8 million will be needed in FY 2026–27 to support interpreter services, which will deplete all program reserves.

Table 1: Midyear Reallocation and Augmentation Plan for FY 2026–27 (\$ in Millions)

CIP Detail	FY 2022–23	FY 2023–24	FY 2024–25	FY 2025–26	FY 2026–27 (Projected)
Appropriation	\$135.5	\$133.8	\$134.8	\$134.8	\$135.1
Surplus or Midyear Augmentation Amount	9.8	-4.6	-11.6	-19.1 ^a	-8.7
Adjustments to Savings			9.0 ^b		
Program Savings Balance	\$35.0	\$30.4	\$27.8	\$8.7	\$0
^a FY 2025–26 deficit of \$19.1 million based on midyear survey data collected from the trial courts. ^b FY 2024–25 program savings balance totaling \$27.8 million after adjustments: \$18.8 million in savings as of June 30, 2025, \$1.6 million in additional savings from year-end survey, and \$7.4 million in restored funding due to inadvertent spending on ineligible activities.					

⁸ The Judicial Council submitted a budget change proposal for increased funding in FY 2026–27 for the TCTF CIP, which was not included in the FY 2026–27 Governor’s Budget released on January 9, 2026.

Council staff will conduct an additional survey before the end of FY 2025–26 to reallocate available savings to those courts with a funding shortfall based on final projected expenditures for the current year.

Policy implications

The funding methodology of using CIP savings to address interpreter expenditure shortfalls is consistent with council policy to make courts whole using CIP savings, as available. Due to rising interpreter costs, courts will need to carefully evaluate their program expenditures, including considering cost-saving measures, to stay within funding allocations and maintain current levels of interpreter services.

Comments

This proposal was not circulated for public comment. However, the recommendations were considered at meetings that were open to the public, and no public comments were received.

Alternatives considered

The recommendations are consistent with current law and approved council policies. No other alternatives were considered.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

For FY 2025–26, following council approval and approval by the Department of Finance and the Legislature, \$19.1 million of the CIP reserve fund will be distributed to courts that anticipate a shortfall. (See Attachment A, Fiscal Year 2025–26 CIP-TCTF Midyear Reallocation and Augmentation Amounts.) The remaining program savings balance of \$8.7 million is available for FY 2026–27.

Courts are encouraged to budget their interpreter expenditures accordingly. Spending beyond the allocation, including any midyear increases, could result in a shortfall that would need to be covered by the impacted courts' operating budgets.

Based on current projections, the program savings are expected to be depleted in FY 2026–27. To address the continued anticipated growth in interpreter expenses and ensure critical services are provided to court users, Judicial Council staff are working with the trial courts to develop a funding request for additional resources beginning in FY 2027–28.

Attachments and Links

1. Attachment A: Fiscal Year 2025–26 CIP-TCTF Midyear Reallocation and Augmentation Amounts
2. Voting instructions, at page 7
3. Vote and signature pages, at pages 8–9

Author

Douglas G. Denton
Principal Manager, Leadership Support Services

Court Number	Court	Current FY 2025–26 CIP Allocation and Benefits	Estimated FY 2025–26 Funding to Be Returned	Estimated FY 2025–26 Additional Funding Requested	Proposed Total CIP Allocation
		A	B	C	D = (A+B+C)
1	Alameda	\$5,802,846	\$0	\$811,000	\$6,613,846
2	Alpine	545	-	1,000	1,545
3	Amador	65,956	-	-	65,956
4	Butte	292,326	-	65,000	357,326
5	Calaveras	44,059	-	-	44,059
6	Colusa	129,857	-	25,000	154,857
7	Contra Costa	3,182,098	-	-	3,182,098
8	Del Norte	29,107	(14,500)	-	14,607
9	El Dorado	254,469	-	29,155	283,624
10	Fresno	2,766,582	-	510,000	3,276,582
11	Glenn	164,755	-	-	164,755
12	Humboldt	104,549	-	10,000	114,549
13	Imperial	778,340	-	37,000	815,340
14	Inyo	62,766	-	-	62,766
15	Kern	3,957,453	-	293,062	4,250,515
16	Kings	719,969	-	21,000	740,969
17	Lake	181,273	-	50,000	231,273
18	Lassen	57,432	-	-	57,432
19	Los Angeles	38,573,574	-	5,026,000	43,599,574
20	Madera	892,686	-	88,500	981,186
21	Marin	832,125	-	276,705	1,108,830
22	Mariposa	58,533	-	-	58,533
23	Mendocino	572,725	-	-	572,725
24	Merced	1,234,534	-	-	1,234,534
25	Modoc	4,872	-	25,000	29,872
26	Mono	72,961	-	25,000	97,961
27	Monterey	1,782,390	-	-	1,782,390
28	Napa	869,592	-	100,000	969,592
29	Nevada	106,681	-	45,000	151,681
30	Orange	9,553,836	-	1,551,386	11,105,222
31	Placer	943,843	-	-	943,843
32	Plumas	2,758	-	-	2,758
33	Riverside	6,944,728	-	971,294	7,916,022
34	Sacramento	5,230,332	-	639,525	5,869,857
35	San Benito	161,127	-	10,000	171,127
36	San Bernardino	6,725,779	-	376,786	7,102,565
37	San Diego	6,929,948	-	-	6,929,948
38	San Francisco	4,711,761	-	1,750,000	6,461,761
39	San Joaquin	2,200,736	-	1,361,049	3,561,785
40	San Luis Obispo	857,810	-	241,155	1,098,965
41	San Mateo	3,589,555	-	1,000,000	4,589,555
42	Santa Barbara	3,129,876	-	422,200	3,552,076
43	Santa Clara	6,748,121	-	1,295,957	8,044,078
44	Santa Cruz	1,025,815	-	175,000	1,200,815
45	Shasta	575,601	(20,601)	-	555,000
46	Sierra	586	-	-	586
47	Siskiyou	69,509	-	-	69,509
48	Solano	895,626	-	396,874	1,292,500
49	Sonoma	1,915,636	-	-	1,915,636
50	Stanislaus	1,744,999	-	350,000	2,094,999
51	Sutter	313,817	-	-	313,817
52	Tehama	253,456	-	-	253,456
53	Trinity	66,692	(23,680)	-	43,012
54	Tulare	2,736,760	-	419,741	3,156,501
55	Tuolumne	75,628	-	-	75,628
56	Ventura	2,930,454	-	500,023	3,430,477
57	Yolo	722,117	-	240,000	962,117
58	Yuba	98,044	-	25,000	123,044
TOTAL		\$134,750,000	-\$58,781	\$19,164,412	\$153,855,631

Instructions for Review and Action by Circulating Order

Voting members

- Please reply to the email message with “I approve,” “I disapprove,” or “I abstain,” by noon on **March 19, 2026**.
- If you are unable to reply by noon on **March 19, 2026**, please do so as soon as possible thereafter.

Advisory members

The circulating order is being emailed to you for your information only. There is no need to sign or return any documents.

CIRCULATING ORDER
Judicial Council of California
Voting and Signature Pages

Effective March 19, 2026, the Judicial Council approves a midyear reallocation of \$59,000 and an augmentation of \$19.1 million for fiscal year 2025–26, drawn from the remaining \$27.8 million savings balance in the Trial Court Trust Fund Court Interpreters Program.

My vote is as follows:

Approve Disapprove Abstain

_____/s/
Patricia Guerrero, Chair

_____/s/
Maria Lucy Armendariz

_____/s/
Bunmi O. Awoniyi

_____/s/
Stacy Boulware Eurie

_____/s/
Carol A. Corrigan

_____/s/
Charles S. Crompton

_____/s/
Judith K. Dulcich

_____/s/
Maureen F. Hallahan

_____/s/
Maria D. Hernandez

_____/s/
Brad R. Hill

Rachel W. Hill

Ash Kalra

_____/s/
Ann C. Moorman

_____/s/
Gretchen M. Nelson

My vote is as follows:

Approve Disapprove Abstain

_____/s/
Ricardo R. Ocampo

_____/s/
Craig M. Peters

_____/s/
Michael Rhoads

_____/s/
Dena Stone

_____/s/
Thomas J. Umberg

_____/s/
Tamara L. Wood

Date: 3/20/2026

Attest:

Michelle Curran
Administrative Director and
Secretary of the Judicial Council