

The Judicial Council of California is the constitutionally created policymaking body of the California courts. The council meets at least six times a year for business meetings that are open to the public and videocast live via the California Courts website. What follows is a formatted and unedited transcript of the last meeting. The official record of each meeting, the meeting minutes, are usually approved by the council at the next business meeting. Much more information about this meeting, the work of the Judicial Council, and the role of the state court system is available on the California Courts website at *courts.ca.gov*.

>> Welcome to the public meeting for the Judicial Council of California for Friday, April 25, 2025. The meeting is now in session. During our technical checks for the live webcast, we have confirmed the attendance of a quorum of Judicial Council members. Based on our agenda, we plan to adjourn at about 12:40 today. I want to begin by recognizing some special guests that are attending our meeting today. We are joined by eight faculty members who teach our new judge orientation program. Raise your hand if you are here. Yes. [Applause] Thank you. Also, we welcome our 17 new judicial officers who participated in the program this week. Welcome. Raise your hand. [Applause] Finally, I also want to acknowledge our visiting court staff from Orange County Superior Court for attending today as part of their LevelUp Leadership Development program. Please raise your hand. [Applause] It was nice to see all of you earlier this week. I want to thank you for your work and again welcome you here today. For our public comment, I will turn it over to our Administrative Presiding Justice Brad Hill.

>> Thank you very much, Chief. We will now begin the public comment portion, during which time the members of the public may speak on matters of judicial administration or specific agenda items. Written public comment is offered for each meeting, and comments received were provided to members of the council. Commenters may address the council in person or remotely. And today's meeting, including public comment, is livestreamed, and the recording will be available publicly online. Please be reminded that the Judicial Council is not an adjudicatory body. The council is not authorized to intervene on behalf of a party in a case. Rather, concerns as to substantive rulings in a case may be addressed through the appropriate procedural mechanisms. We request that you refrain from speaking about specific cases and the individuals involved, including court personnel and policies. At this time, we'll turn to those speakers with us remotely. I believe we have one. I will begin by calling the remote speakers. We will then proceed to call in-person public comment. All speakers will have up to three minutes to present their comments. When your name is called, please turn on your camera. I see that you have done that. Unmute your microphone, begin by stating your name and, if applicable, your title and affiliation. A timer is displayed on the screen to help you keep track of your allotted time. The light will change from green to yellow when you have one minute remaining. A red light will appear when your time is expired. Please begin your concluding remarks when you see the yellow light. And we have with us at this time Gayatri Gunasekaran, and I hope I got your name somewhat correct.

>> You did.

>> Good. It's nice to have you with us. Please proceed.

>> Thank you. Respected members of the Judicial Council, thank you for this opportunity to state my concern to you. At present, there is no internal process or means of redress for wronged court employees who are treated unfairly or even wrongfully terminated. The Judicial Council can correct this deficiency by creating a board to review and redress the grievances of court employees. Without an opportunity for immediate internal hearings, court employees are forced to submit to lengthy, potentially costly, and often ineffective measures in order to protect their reputations and even careers. Court employees should not have to sue or file with the overburdened Labor Commission in order to have their proverbial day in court. The court could provide an impartial internal hearing for court employees who face censure or termination by court administration. Mr. Navarrete, clerk and executive officer of the California Supreme Court, made me realize that a review board is needed to help court employees. In response to my letter to the Honorable Chief Justice Guerrero asking for help, Mr. Navarrete told me that the Honorable Chief Justice and the California Supreme Court lack authority to help or advise on a matter involving a separate employer, namely, the Court of Appeal. Therefore, I respectfully suggest that the Judicial Council create an impartial review board to provide court employees with the justice that they naturally expect to receive from the California judiciary. Thank you very much for taking the time to hear my suggestion. Do you have any questions for me?

>> We don't, and I thank you very much for being with us today. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> We will turn next to a speaker here in person. Please begin by stating your name and, if applicable, your title and affiliation. On the podium, we have lights that will inform you of the time you have remaining. Once again, the yellow light will come on when you have one minute; a red light will come on when your time is expired. We just have the one speaker with us, and I believe it's Mr. Kai On. Nice to have you with us. Please proceed.

>> Good morning, all council members. My name is Kai On. Honored Guerrero, I'm begging for your help to look into my complaints to the State Bar of California and Commission on Judicial Performance about I receive fake defendant information from Sacramento DA office for my father, Woong On, on staff. Here is the handwritten note from the DA office. Last month, I went to Sacramento Superior Court, sending a second letter to Presiding Judge Brown, grand jury law, to investigate my complaint. I ran into attorney general two time at Sacramento. On April 2 this month, I went to Mr. Bonta's office in this building dropping off a letter with the forgery document. Nobody answer the door. I put the letter under the door. I also put a letter to Governor's office. I have protest at the front door of Sacramento attorney general's office, Sacramento district attorney's office, and Sacramento Superior Court. I even hand flyer to their staff. There is no reason for Sacramento presiding judge, Sacramento district attorney, and attorney general not knowing my complaint. They did not investigate this obstruction of justice

and is criminal matter. However, Commission on Judicial Performance did not take any action, and State of California claim my complaint is civil matter. In February this year, Sacramento City Council even asked a UC Davis student internship given me a forgery police report. Sacramento city attorney office is involved, and Sacramento mayor knew my complaint. I was here in September 2024. As of today, I still don't know who killed my father. The justice system and the law enforcement system are forcing me to find out who killed my father. Someone is afraid of real judgment and is using political power and fake information to cover up a scandal during the investigation of my father's death. California justice system is being interfered. This building and Judicial Council afford to uphold judges. Honored Guerrero, here is the letter that I send it to you asking for your help. And I attach the forgery document from the DA office. Please investigate my complaint and the DA case number 99FC0X735 for the fake defendant. Thank you.

>> Thank you very much. We appreciate you coming in this afternoon. We will just note that you can certainly continue watching on the website or certainly in the gallery here. We appreciate your time. Chief, that concludes the public comment, and I see that you have a letter and we will make sure that's distributed. Thank you very much.

>> Thank you, Justice Hill. Thank you to both of you for your public comments here today. Next on our agenda is my regular report as Chief Justice summarizing some of my engagements and ongoing outreach activities on behalf of the judicial branch since our last business meeting on February 20. Last month, in Sacramento, I addressed the joint gathering of the state Legislature for my third annual State of the Judiciary address. Governor Newsom was present with Assembly Speaker Rivas and Senate President Pro Tem McGuire, justices and staff from the California Supreme Court, and of course many of you in this room, along with our Bench-Bar Coalition members and our justice system partners. In my remarks, I emphasized the judicial branch's commitment to public service and access to justice for all Californians, the continued importance of remote proceedings, our work to enhance caseflow management and more timely case resolution, and our continued focus to address the developing field of artificial intelligence in a deliberative fashion. I also spoke about some of the issues associated with the failed administration of the California State Bar exam and our commitment to provide meaningful remedies for impacted students. And also about the issue of immigration policies and enforcement as they relate to our courts and our firm commitment to ensuring that courthouses are open and available to all who come before us. I also had the pleasure of being involved with three events that represent our commitment to civic education and cultivating the next generation of legal professionals. At the 19th annual San Diego County High School mock trial competition awards ceremony, joined by Presiding Judge Hallahan and Judge Campagna, I helped to honor the award-winning students and programs in this year's mock trial competitions. I also had the privilege of attending UC Davis's Discover Law Day to meet with and answer questions from high school and undergraduate students, many of them first-generation college students who are interested in exploring careers in the law. They didn't all raise their hand at the beginning if they were interested in a career in the law. I hope I convinced many of them, though, toward the end. The program provides them with the tools,

mentorship, and inspiration to pursue legal education and become leaders in our communities. It was a powerful reminder of the importance of our outreach efforts in underserved communities in particular. Most recently, I had the honor of accepting the Trailblazer Award and delivering the keynote address at the 23rd Annual Cruz Reynoso Gala hosted by La Alianza in Berkeley Law. This event, held in memory of Justice Reynoso's legacy, celebrates Latino students pursuing public interest internships and judicial externships, the future leaders, again, in the legal profession. Looking to the future of our judicial branch, I had the pleasure of welcoming six groups of judges and commissioners to my chambers in San Francisco, including our guests at today's meeting here, who were participating in our new judge orientation program. The groups included 47 judges and 13 commissioners representing 25 trial courts from throughout the state. Again, welcome to all of you. I also attended two recent events that highlight the dedication of our legal community. For the second year in a row, I gave a keynote address for the Outstanding Volunteers in Public Service awards hosted by the Justice and Diversity Center for the Bar Association of San Francisco, held at UC Law SF. This event recognized 10 exceptional attorneys and teams who very generously volunteered their time to serve low-income clients in need of legal representation. I also joined members of our Los Angeles legal community and gave the keynote address for the 70th annual awards gala and dinner hosted by the Criminal Courts Bar Association of Los Angeles. I was especially proud to celebrate our colleague and fellow council member Judge Armendariz. Congratulations again. She received the Judicial Excellence Award. In addition, Los Angeles Judge Ronald Kaye was honored for outstanding community service, and Judge Alan Honeycutt received the President's Award. I was really moved by the inspiring work of all the award recipients in the Los Angeles legal community. Especially during these times, it was an important reminder of the need for all of us to collectively do our part to safeguard the rights of all litigants, to protect the independence of the courts and the legal profession as a whole, and ultimately to protect public trust and confidence in our judicial process. This concludes my report. Now we will hear from Administrative Director Shelley Curran with her report to you.

>> Thank you. Good morning, Chief, and good morning, council members. I want to first ask to call your attention to my regular written report, which is included in your meeting materials today. The report represents a roundup of the programmatic and service activities that the Judicial Council staff has been up to since our last regular meeting that we had in January. It's separate and apart from those matters that are included in the business agenda today. It includes a recap of the 20 council advisory committees that met during this time period, and it also notes more than 45 educational and training programs and resource tools that were created, updated, or delivered for judicial officers, court personnel, and justice system partners during this reporting period. Some of these programs include the annual Presiding Judge and Court Executive Officer Court Management Institute, validating pretrial risk assessments, a podcast in applying the Racial Justice Act in juvenile proceedings, and the new judges orientation. The Chief Justice mentioned that many new judges were here today. That is one of the programs that we have put on during this period too. I would like to call your attention to a couple of things that are actually included in the written report. The first is the judicial demographic report. For the 19th straight year in a row, the Judicial Officer Demographic Data Report was

published on the California Courts website, and it was published in March, and it shows that the bench in California continues to grow more diverse and we have a steady increase in the number of women judges and judges and justices of color. The mandated report reflects demographic information that is self-reported by judicial officers on the bench as of December 2024, and we had a response rate this year of more than 93 percent. The collected data shows that women comprised 43.3 percent of judicial officers across all levels of courts, which is an increase of over 15 percent since December 2006, which was the first year the data was collected for this purpose. The bench also continues to become more racially and ethnically diverse. The percentage of responding Asian, Black, and Hispanic judicial officers has more than doubled since 2006. More welcome news to add to all of this is the Governor's appointment of 24 new judicial officers since our February meeting. Information was provided to the trial courts in multiple languages to help self-help centers to make clear to court users that California courts do not direct and make decisions related to immigration status. Little cards were provided in multiple languages, and we have received positive feedback from the courts. Courts have actually asked for additional information, and we have encouraged courts to provide information related to the availability of information on our California Courts website. The website includes basic information on immigration resources, help for families and children, how to find legal help, and also information on the special immigrant juvenile classification. In the area of family law, the report notes that the Judicial Council is annually required to test and certify child support guideline calculators used by the courts in order to ensure that they are consistent with statute and rules of court. Testing is overseen by our AB 1058 program, which is staffed within our Center for Families, Children & the Courts. Altogether, there are five child support guideline calendars certified for use by the trial courts. A final couple of items that I would like to ask to call your attention to in the report includes in the area of technology. A court records digitization project was completed during this time period for eight trial courts. They digitized 91 million pages of court records, and this effort reduces storage costs and makes it easier to access these records, especially during hearings, and it speeds up file retrieval. The state information technology security and annual IT disaster recovery exercise was conducted to test our infrastructure, network services, and court applications for the appellate courts and the Judicial Council, and a branchwide webinar was held for judicial officers and court executives on cybersecurity trends, threats, best practices, and court security strategies. I also want to share some information separate from my written report, specifically support services for smaller counties in California. Over the past year plus, as time permits, I've had the opportunity to get out and visit some courts and to see and hear about some of the challenges that courts are facing as they are trying to serve their community. So far, I have made it to about 15 courts, including some that fall within our cluster 1 and cluster 2 courts, a.k.a. our small and medium courts. I have recently been to Marin, Mendocino, San Benito, and it's given me an opportunity to hear about some of the unique challenges that our smaller courts face: things like limited staff. staff are often dedicated to more than one area that they are responsible for, HR facilities, IT, a myriad of things. Need for specific expertise without having quite enough volume, so things like research attorneys and difficulty hiring people in some more rural areas, IT, security, whatnot, in some of these smaller courts. So in recognition of some of these challenges, a working group of court executive officers has been

put together, and we have included workgroup members from large, small, and medium courts to think about how we can better support the local smaller courts. Not just by the council, but also partnerships with some of the other courts that do have these resources. So for example, we're looking at things like tailored Judicial Council services specifically to address small court needs, things like general ledger processing, outside vendors. We are trying to identify outside vendors who can provide greater services to some of these courts. And then resource-sharing opportunities between the small courts, so things like a single research attorney who might be able to provide services across different counties. And then finally, the possibility of some of the larger courts providing services to the smaller courts through agreed-upon expectations with service-level agreements in place and clearly documented roles and responsibilities. The working group's been meeting and will provide updates at the May and November meetings of our Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee and our Court Executives Advisory Committee as we think about the most critical needs that the courts have and how it is that we can most effectively support them. Finally, it's hard to provide a report, especially this time of the year, without speaking about the budget and what's happening with the State Budget. In January, when the Governor released his proposed budget for fiscal year 2025-26, the administration underscored the importance of making cautious decisions. In the next couple of weeks, May 14, to be exact, Governor Newsom will release his May Revise, and that begins the final sprint to the enactment of the budget by the end of June. For the current budget year, the branch has had to manage budget reductions while also receiving a level of reduction, and then a slight increase in that restoration, which we were very grateful for. As we're approaching this May Revise, we all need to be aware of some of the significant challenges that the state is facing right now in the form of tariffs that are creating some market volatility, actual and likely cuts to federal funding, the wildfires in Los Angeles that also resulted in a delayed tax deadline, and a significant hole in Medicaid funding. And this is among other challenges that the state typically faces. And so these are the headwinds that the state is really facing as we approach the May Revise. We are engaging with the administration and Legislature and advocating for our judicial branch priorities. Our team at the council, joined by trial court representatives, has participated in budget hearings in both the Senate and the Assembly, And I want to thank Judge Rogan, Mr. Darrel Parker, Judge Moorman, Justice Boulware Eurie, and others for helping to carry the message that includes the basic needs of the courts and then new responsibilities that we have related to Proposition 36, the ever-constant need for court-appointed counsel, and then also, of course, our court construction fund. The Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee and the Judicial Branch Budget Committee are continuing to work with us on considering all of the different scenarios as we go into the May Revise, but I think we all should expect a tough year ahead. When we meet again in July, it will be when the council will make decisions about the allocations of the funds. So more to follow, and a lot to follow in the next couple of months on that. Before I conclude, I want to take this opportunity to publicly recognize the retirement of Charli Depner. Charli was with the Judicial Council for 35 years, and she spent the last time as the director of our Center for Families, Children & the Courts. At last year's Judicial Council Service Awards ceremony, the Chief and I and Charli's work colleagues had an opportunity to thank and honor her for her remarkable service in the California court system. Throughout her long career with the council staff organization, and particularly since she was director of CFCC,

Charli provided essential leadership to that multidisciplinary team of attorneys and analysts and researchers and also working closely with our justice system partners to really further Californians who appear before the courts to ensure that those who come before us for mental health proceedings, family, juvenile, probate proceedings all receive fair, impartial, and accessible access to justice. So I want to thank Charli, and with that, that concludes my report, Chief.

>> Thank you so much, Shelley, for your helpful and comprehensive report. Next, we have our consent agenda. We have about 25 items on the consent agenda. As you know, the council's Executive and Planning Committee sets items on the consent and discussion agendas to try to best optimize the use of our meeting time. The council's Rules Committee provides guidance to the Executive and Planning Committee on agenda setting relating to rules proposals. The fact that an item is on the consent agenda does not reflect its significance, and any council member can request that an item be moved from the consent to the discussion agenda if they believe it would benefit from further discussion and deliberation here. As always, we appreciate the many hours of work that are put in by our advisory committees and council staff in order to enable these recommendations to come before us. Are there any members of the council who have comments or questions about any consent item? Yes, Justice Fujisaki?

>> Thank you, Chief, and good morning to everybody. We have a sizable consent agenda today, and before we vote, I thought it might be helpful for those following the council as well as our guests to highlight some information about the forums and rules proposals that we're considering this morning. So in preparation for today, the Rules Committee reviewed and recommends approval of a number of proposals for technical and minor updates to 39 Judicial Council forms and three rules of court, all of which will keep our forms and rules accurate and current. But on a more substantive level, the Rules Committee recommends approval of an additional 10 proposals from the different advisory committees that circulated for public comment during the winter cycle. These substantive proposals involve 28 court forms, 20 rules of court, and one standard of judicial administration. So during the public comment process for these items, the responsible advisory committees received nearly 50 comments, and as you can see from the charts attached to the reports, each comment was carefully considered and responded to, and I'd just like to illustrate the breadth of these proposals by calling attention to just two of them. First, item 25-073 is a joint report from CEAC, the Court Executives Advisory Committee, and ITAC, the Information Technology Advisory Committee. This report recommends adoption of a new rule of court that creates a process for developing and approving branchwide guidelines for technology and data security. This proposal originated with the Joint Information Security Governance Subcommittee, which reviews and recommends security-related guidelines, policies, and other proposals for action by CEAC and ITAC. So if this rule is adopted, ITAC will begin recommending guidelines to help ensure a minimum level of information security across the branch in the application of best practices for information security more effectively. The proposed procedures will give courts an opportunity to provide feedback while the guidelines are being developed, help ITAC identify potential implementation issues, and ensure that the guidelines work for courts of all sizes and at all

levels of information security experience and infrastructure. So on a different plane is item 25-074, which is a report from the Probate and Mental Health Advisory Committee that recommends revisions to two rules of court in six Judicial Council forms that are used by probate conservators and guardians to give notice of life events affecting persons under a conservatorship or guardianship. Specifically, the changes help to facilitate timely notice of residential changes and, for conservatees, notices of death as well as notice of any funeral, memorial, or burial arrangements made by a conservator. These changes implement the Legislature's efforts to close gaps in the conservatorship system and to provide family members and other interested persons with more information about conservatees to help them stay in touch and also for those people to achieve closure in the event of a conservatee's death. Those are just two examples of the extensive, substantive work being done by our advisory committees. As you can see, many other advisory committees have also contributed to the consent agenda today. So with that, I thank you, Chief, for this opportunity to provide a little bit more background and elaboration on the consent items before we vote.

>> Thank you. I think those are good examples of really highlighting the work that goes on behind the scenes in order to prepare the reports for today, and then also the fact, as the first example points out on technology and data security, we obtained feedback for the information that we present at the Judicial Council meeting, but then there is also feedback we solicit as part of the implementation process. We are always ensuring we work collaboratively with the local courts and really appreciate the public feedback as well. Thank you for pointing those examples out. We also had the opportunity to review all of these reports in advance of the council meeting, so now that you have had an opportunity to review the reports, I will invite a motion to move approval of the consent agenda.

>> So moved, Chief.

>> Thank you. Is there a second?

>> Second.

>> Corrigan moves. Thank you for the second, Mr. Yamasaki. All in favor, say aye. Any nos or abstentions? Thank you, the consent agenda is approved. We also now have six discussion items today. Our first item addresses racial disparities and improving equity in California's adult collaborative programs. This is item number 25-051 in your materials. The council welcomes the following presenters: Justice Charles A. Smiley III, vice-chair of the Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee, and Ms. Veronica D. Lewis, cochair of the Racial Justice Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee, and Ms. Deanna Adams, Criminal Justice Services. Welcome to all of you.

>> Thank you. Good morning, Chief Justice and members of the Judicial Council. We are members of the Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee and appear in that capacity. We are also members of a subcommittee of that group, the Racial Justice Equity and Inclusion

Subcommittee. The report we will be discussing today that you already have comments on a lens and request we will make at the end of today's discussion. First, for those who are listening and perhaps unaware, and not our members, of course, a few words about what collaborative courts are. Collaborative courts are treatment courts. People come to us through criminal cases or matters that begin as criminal cases to obtain some type of treatment. And as the name suggests, collaborative courts involve a partnership between the court and stakeholders, including prosecutors, public defenders and the defense bar, behavioral health departments, and a whole host of different types of service providers, the goal always being to achieve some form of stability, to advance public safety, and promote accountability. And it is intensive work that works. So we're here to discuss not only collaborative courts but also a way that we might address some disparities that have been noted in the report that has been submitted. So today we will introduce that report. That report is entitled Addressing Racial Disparities and Improving Equity in California's Adult Collaborative Programs. My colleague and I will introduce ourselves in just a moment. First, a word about Deanna Adams, our supervising analyst, who's done tremendous work on behalf of the committee and, of course, has been a great contributor to the report that is before you today. As stated, my name is Charles Smiley, I am an associate justice, a new associate justice on the First District Court of Appeal, Division One.

>> Good morning, Chief Justice and council members. My name is Veronica Lewis, and I'm the director of one of the largest homeless and housing agencies in Los Angeles County, in addition to providing behavioral health and reentry services, and I'm glad to be here today.

>> Thank you. Our committee is chaired by Judge Brown, Lawrence Brown, of the Sacramento Superior Court. I want to begin by way of introduction by indicating that the advisory committee we are representing today has as one of its responsibilities the role of making recommendations to this body on best practices and guidelines that concern collaborative programs. And we're here in that capacity. Our overview of the report will focus on opportunities for this council to support trial courts in addressing racial disparities and improving equitable access to participation and, of course, outcomes across our state's collaborative treatment courts. We have about 400 of them as of today and various diversion programs.

>> Today's presentation will highlight the report's four priority areas and related policy recommendations, the first of which is leveraging Judicial Council data collection initiatives to support collaborative programs in collecting data on race and ethnicity. Second, encouraging all adult collaborative programs to assess equity and inclusion within program operations and take dedicated actions to improve equity within program participation, retention, and participant outcomes. Also, promoting the state level adoption and local application of current best practices for advancing equity within adult collaborative programs. And fourth, supporting collaborative program operations and encouraging engagement with justice system partners who represent and reflect the local racial and ethnic diversity of the counties.

>> So we've created or developed different priority areas that we'll discuss as recommendations in a moment. And these will identify opportunities for our committee to not only support collaborative courts with diversity, equity, and inclusion but also with their operations. We also see this as a way to also support the implementation of new laws. As you know, Senate Bill 910, which was authored by Senator Umberg, one of your members, was signed into law last year, and it amends Health and Safety Code section 11972. That statute will require courts to design and operate adult collaborative treatment courts in accordance with the adult treatment court best-practice standards and family treatment court best-practice standards developed by an organization called All Rise, which is formerly known as the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. This statute has 11 key components, and it's the 11th that I would like to focus on today because it resonates well with the mission and goals of the report that we've submitted. This 11th component requires adult collaborative courts to, quote, ensure equitable access, services, and outcomes for all sociodemographic and sociocultural groups.

>> The racial justice equity and inclusion workgroup that's now a subcommittee began in 2022, and we spent the first year doing literature reviews, learning about best practices, and hosting presentations from experts across the state and country. The All Rise standards provide programmatic areas detailing evidence-based, peer-reviewed best practices and implementation strategies that allow adult drug and other treatment courts to be successful. The All Rise standards also include best practices for improving access to programs through objective eligibility and exclusion criteria and to reduce barriers to treatment and services. The standards are grounded in the principle of risk-need-responsivity, a concept that calls for objective consideration and intervention to address a participant's treatment and criminogenic needs while also focusing placement decisions on the types of services and providers that best match each participant's motivation, cultural background, and other characteristics that maximize their ability to benefit from the program.

>> You will see that our report also aligns with goal one of the Judicial Branch Strategic Plan, which itself provides for access, fairness, diversity, and inclusion, a goal calling upon all courts to remove all barriers to access and fairness by being responsive to the state's cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, physical, gender, sexual orientation, and age diversities to all people as a whole. The goal also asks members of the judicial branch to strive to understand and be responsive to the needs of court users from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Lastly, we believe this report also complements the efforts of a host of workgroups and other advisory bodies that report to you, including we'll mention a tool kit developed by the Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness. And that committee also had an opportunity to review the report we've submitted to you today.

>> Now turning to the report itself, we focus on racial equity as a data-driven measure that is achieved when racial identity can no longer be used to predict individual or group outcomes and when outcomes for all groups are improved. This is not a measure unique to California. National studies on treatment courts across the country illustrate differences in participant

outcomes such as the statistics shown here and detailed in the report. These studies have helped the field to identify measurable milestones and outcomes that collaborative courts can track to improve outcomes for all participants at every decision point, beginning with program referral and acceptance through program completion. California collaborative courts have begun using data to inform program outcomes. This priority area describes actions that the committee can take to support the courts' existing efforts and that can be accomplished through regular advisory committee work processes. We were proud to see that the recent council and court data initiatives are already accomplishing this priority area. We particularly want to highlight our management information system, also known as MIS, project for adult treatment courts that showcases the collaborative work being done between the trial courts and the council to support the branch. Thanks to the council's forward-thinking Court Innovations Grant Program, the Superior Court of Alameda County received a grant in 2016 to create a management information system for their collaborative court. Realizing the utility of the system, the council used funds received from a 2020 federal grant to work with Alameda court and rural treatment courts across the state to retrofit the system for use by courts that may not have a case management system specifically designed for their local treatment courts. Work on the case management system was completed in 2024, and the system is now available to courts in need. We are excited about this advancement as it showcases the value of the council's commitment to support collaborative courts, and it enhances opportunities for courts to comply with the data evaluation guidelines embedded in the All Rise standard and Health and Safety Code component. Priority two is related to the equity assessment tool. Effective data collection tools are critical to fully understand and do meaningful data analysis to help inform future strategies to address inequities. It's important that all adult collaborative court programs are encouraged and supported to assess equity and inclusion within program operations and take dedicated actions to improve equity within program participation, retention, and outcomes. To carry out this priority and to assist the courts in implementing the key components underscored in the Health and Safety Code Justice Smiley reviewed a few slides ago, we recommend that all adult collaborative courts use an assessment tool to identify and correct areas where racial disparities may exist. The committee identified a free tool designed by leading national subject matter experts that courts can use. This tool is recognized by All Rise and has been used by treatment courts across the country. We also recommend that the council's Criminal Justice Services office continue to work with the advisory committee to explore funding opportunities to provide technical assistance to courts as they implement these assessment tools.

>> The third priority area involves applying best practices. And here this priority addresses the identification and promotion of current best practices for advancing equity within adult collaborative and treatment programs. This priority area describes actions that I'll note can be accomplished through regular advisory committee work processes. As I mentioned earlier, SB 910 asks collaborative courts to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into program operations, and this is a core belief that our committee, of course, holds, and we plan to develop and share best practices, educational materials, and other resources that will support the work of our state's collaborative courts. We will share helpful resources that advance equitable program

operations, showcase equity models that currently exist throughout the state, and also assist with SB 910's implementation.

>> Priority four is related to strengthening community engagement. Having multiple perspectives that reflect the diverse racial and ethnic makeups from the communities surrounding collaborative courts is critical. Supporting collaborative program operations and encouraging engagement with justice system partners who represent and reflect the local racial and ethnic diversity of the county. Courts have existing channels of communications with court users and stakeholders in their community. We recognize that the council has also been committed to enhancing these channels of communication through the creation of various rules of court, standards of judicial administration, and other available authorities. Under this priority area, we would like to ensure collaborative courts are able to leverage these channels in a way to best engage communities and stakeholders represented across their counties. To do this, we propose to, one, examine procedures described in the California Rules of Court, the California Standards of Judicial Administration, and the Drug Court Programs Act under Health and Safety Code section 11970 that collaborative programs can leverage to engage stakeholders reflective of the unique diversity of the counties. If through this examination, we find amendments to existing authorities may be needed for collaborative programs to effectively bridge connections with local communities, we will look to the advisory committee process, such as the annual agenda and approval by our oversight committee to seek revisions that can better assist the court programs.

>> So our report highlights four priority areas that we've identified for you. We will be making a recommendation on only two of them, and heeding member Curran's remarks about the budget, I want everyone to know that nothing we are saying today is going to add new or additional costs to any court. We believe what we're proposing can be accomplished using existing committee resources and staffing. So the first recommendation we are making to this body is as follows. Our advisory committee recommends that the council direct our committee to implement priority area number two, which will have us encourage all adult collaborative programs to assess equity and inclusion within their program operations and take dedicated actions to improve equity within programs to affect access, participation, retention, and of course, generate an optimized positive outcome. This recommendation will also allow the advisory committee, our advisory committee, to work with collaborative courts and especially those that work with people facing mental illness, substance use disorder, or co-occurring disorder, to use assessment tools that will identify and correct areas, where needed, to address racial disparities where they exist. It would also direct the Judicial Council's Criminal Justice Services staff to assist us in exploring funding options to support a pilot program that could offer technical assistance to implement this type of assessment for our courts.

>> We also recommend that the council direct our advisory committee to implement priority area number four, which again supports collaborative program operations and encourages engagement with justice system partners who represent and reflect the local racial and ethnic diversity of the county. This recommendation would allow our advisory committee to examine

existing authorities that collaborative programs can leverage to engage stakeholders reflective of the unique diversity of each county. Existing authorities may include, again, the California Rules of Court, the California Standards of Judicial Administration, and legislation. If the committee finds it necessary, following the examination, the committee may seek to propose amendments as necessary to better assist the collaborative programs with connecting to their communities.

>> So thank you. As a quick word on why we're pushing two recommendations and we've presented four high-priority areas, the other two, items one and three, we believe we can address through our regular agenda process throughout the year and don't require asking or putting them forward as a recommendation today. Last remarks?

>> Thank you. We appreciate being invited here to present the report and recommendations that we have been working on for three years. In particular, in this environment, it's meaningful to be able to come before you to talk about addressing very serious racial disparities and inequities within the collaborative court. And beyond the actions and activities outlined in the report, as I mentioned earlier, the advisory committee made the Racial Justice Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee a standing fixture to recognize the importance of having an ongoing workgroup dedicated to long-term planning. This will also help ensure that the work that, hopefully, we begin today is sustainable through the future of the state's collaborative programs. Thank you.

>> Thank you for your work, and thank you for your consideration.

>> Thank you for your work in this important area and your longstanding commitment to ensuring equal access to justice in our collaborative courts. I wanted to thank Senator Umberg for his leadership in this area too, through your advocacy for SB 910. Also, you touched upon it here and in the materials as well, the objectives that are behind the program that is being proposed here are to illuminate disparities and improve outcomes for everyone and provide full access and participation for all people. This, of course, is designed to improve the work of our collaborative courts, which are designed to reduce recidivism and improve participant outcomes for all. So thank you again. I will open it up to see if there are any additional comments or questions for our presenters. Yes, Judge Hernandez.

>> Thank you, Chief. And thank you very much for this presentation. The collaborative courts, those treatment courts, are so important as we approach everything that we do. And so, as to the Chief's point on equal access to justice, I join in thanking Senator Umberg. It's more of a comment in how important best practices and the application having been involved in collaborative courts since 1995, sadly, I'm saying that, long ago, but how important that is to have that equal access to justice with the information and the application of best practices. I will ask one question, Justice Smiley. You know where this is going to come from. It's focused on adult treatment courts, and I understand that, but I would also ask or like to question have the juvenile justice treatment courts been discussed in this arena? Because we know the expansion of our work in juvenile justice and what the treatment courts mean there, and I always hate to

see that the justice courts and juvenile are an afterthought. Has there been any discussion about incorporating juvenile justice?

>> Great question. And thank you for giving me a softball to highlight some of the great work of my committee. This is not planned. We are one subcommittee that is part of the Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee; we also have a juvenile subcommittee that does great work. And in fact, I wish I were in a position to share with you a document that is forthcoming because one of its concerns is, which you highlight, Judge, is the one that not every trial court across the 58 counties has the resources to commit to this intensive work. Judicial supervision requires a lot of trips to court. It requires an organization to provide treatment that is sometimes herculean. We are mindful of that and trying to figure out ways to extend best practices so that even courts that aren't well resourced yet have opportunities and models to figure out how they, too, can provide appropriate treatment toward the juvenile rehabilitative goals. We are definitely mindful of that area and working to bring all of these ideas to all human beings in California.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you. Thank you for your question. Are there any others? Yes, Ms. Nelson.

>> Thank you very much, Chief, and also thank you for the presentation. I had one question which came about as a result of the slide, which was a slide that I thought seemed to indicate that the percentages of success was a national average. Is that right? Where they were, by demographic, identifying in collaborative courts the extent to which certain populations were successfully being treated and those that were not as successful. If that's a national average, are you seeing that same percentage applying here in California, or is that part of the process of trying to make sure there is more data gathered to determine?

>> I don't have those numbers in front of me right now. I don't know. It may be included in a footnote in our report. There is a lot of information there. I will defer to our supervising analyst to see if she has anything to add.

>> The numbers that you referenced are national numbers, and what we have learned through the information-gathering process is that some courts are beginning to collect data, but we don't have the statewide picture. So it would be part of the process.

>> Thank you very much.

>> Senator Umberg?

>> Thank you, Madam Chief Justice, and thank you, Justice Smiley and Madam Chief Justice for acknowledging me just doing my job. Number two, at the risk of repeating myself, it is so important, I think, that legislators actually see that the courts do other things than what they see

on Law & Order, and the collaborative courts are a great example of how the courts basically integrate themselves in the fabric of society, and long-term public safety issues are addressed in the collaborative courts. Ms. Curran and I had a conversation this morning about the 19 legislators out of the 120 that have visited the last couple of years at the invitation of many of the folks here. I would just encourage us to continue to invite legislators to come and, in particular, see the collaborative courts in operation. Particularly when we are stretched for resources, this is an important place to invest some of our resources. Thank you, Madam Chief Justice.

>> Thank you. And I completely agree. You know where I stand on inviting all of your colleagues to visit. I will continue to do so. And I agree, in particular, the good work that is being done in collaborative courts would be important to highlight. Thank you. Anyone else? Yes, Judge Moorman.

>> Thank you for the presentation. The report is excellent. The presentation really captured some of the highlights and really excellent. Our collaborative courts, of course, are our greatest effort to raise everyone and to make our communities safe, healthy, and all of the work that is put into the report, as your colleagues have really demonstrated the best that we can do. And thank you. We will strive to set the goals, and with that, I move to adopt the recommendations.

>> Thank you, Judge Moorman. Is there a second?

>> Second.

>> Wow. Okay. Thank you. I heard Judge Crompton. All in favor, say aye. Any opposed or any abstentions? Thank you, this item is approved. We appreciate, again, your presentation and all your work.

>> Thank you, Chief Justice.

>> For our second item, we have an update. This is related to the Resource Assessment Study Model, item number 25-094. And we welcome our presenters here today who are setting up now. Judge Hinrichs, chair of the Data Analytics Advisory Committee, and also Judge Thomas Kuhnle, vice-chair of the Data Analytics Advisory Committee, Ms. Leah Rose-Goodwin, Research Analytics, and also Ms. Kristin Greenaway, Research Analytics. Welcome to all of you. Wait, there are three of you.

>> Right. Judge Kuhnle couldn't be here today.

>> Oh, I'm sorry. I am sure he is watching.

>> All right. Thank you, Chief, members of the council. We are happy to be here today to present key results of our report, answer any questions, and recommend further actions. I am

Judge Hinrichs, chair of the Data Analytics Advisory Committee, which we will refer to as DAAC for short. I'm joined with our staff from the committee, Leah Rose-Goodwin, chief data analytics officer in Research Analytics and Data, and Kristin Greenaway, manager in Research Analytics and Data at the JCC. We are presenting the Resource Assessment Study Model update and recommend the council approve the data, caseweights, and other model parameters. The update is based on a 2024 time study in the trial courts as well as other model parameter updates, including the work-year value and three-year average findings. Today, we will begin with an overview of the methodology used to develop the Resource Assessment Study model. The Resource Assessment model will be referred to in the report in our discussion today as RAS for simplicity, but we didn't want to catch you off guard with all our jargon. We will then discuss the findings from that study. We'll have time for questions at the end before asking that you approve our recommendations. I'll turn the presentation over to Kristin Greenaway at this time.

>> All right, thank you, Judge. Thank you, Chief, and thank you, members of the council. My name is Kristin Greenaway, I'm a manager in Research Analytics and Data, and the Resource Assessment Study Model, or the RAS, is a model we use to assess resource need in the California trial courts. The RAS is a weighted caseload model. All that means is that different types of cases are assigned caseweights, or time to account for differences in workload. The methodology was developed by the National Center for State Courts, and it's used in at least 30 other states to measure court workload, different types of court workload. The Resource Assessment Study Model is an approved methodology. The RAS was first approved by the council in 2005, and then the model was later approved and updated in 2013 and again in 2017. All right. So the purpose of the workload models is to provide a means to objectively assess resource need and to account for differences in workload. So, for example, two courts may have a very similar volume of filings, just total counts of filings, but each court's case mix may look very different. One court may have more felonies, another court may have more infraction filings, and those differences in case mix can result in differences in workload demands for those courts and differences in resource needs. And then additionally, the workload models allow us to capture changes over time. We do that through annual updated filings and also do that through a periodic update of caseweights through a time study, which is what we are talking about today, primarily. All right, so there are three basic inputs to develop resource need. We use filings, we use a three-year average of filings. Caseweights, that's just the time to process different types of cases. And a work-year value. A work-year value is the time available that staff have to do their work. And these all come together; you can see that in the calculation on the slide. They come together to estimate resource need. All right. So again, the output of the RAS model is an estimation of resource need. It's expressed as staff full-time equivalents, or FTEs, needed in the trial courts. So the FTE need is later converted to dollar need using the workload formula. That need is compared to actual dollars to assess funding needed in the trial courts and assist in the equitable allocation of finite statewide resources. All right. So today, the primary focus is the 2024 RAS time study update, or the RAS study update using the time study. The current updates to the RAS model are based on a 2024 time study in 19 trial courts across the state. We had over 5,000 court staff participating and submitting their time. I'll take

this quick minute to say thank you. It is important, but a very big ask of the courts to participate in these studies. So during the time study, we try to include a representative sample of courts, so those 19 courts, we get small, medium, large courts, rural, urban, and suburban courts. I just want to make sure that we are representing the state as a whole. We include all case-processing staff, and we also include contractor time. We want to capture that full range of workload happening in the courts. And again, we include multiple courts as well, not just for that representative sample, but we also know that not everything is happening all at the same time. Some courts maybe aren't doing the workload we know is happening, so if it's not happening in one court, we know it's happening in other courts that are participating in the study. And then, just to note that noncase processing work is also counted in those caseweights. So public counter work, warrant processing that's not tied to a specific filing, we want to capture all the workload that is moving those filings from the time they come into the court through disposition and postdisposition. And then another note here is that a lot of workload is not coming in as a filing. We see that in some of that postdisposition work, that resentencing work that's captured in those caseweights. So that time is captured in the model through the caseweights. All right. So just talking a little bit about what that study output is. The study output includes caseweights, time for 22 different case types, and of those, there are two new caseweights for this particular study compared to the last study: mental health certification and cases related to the CARE Act. Mental health certification, if you are following the caseweights, we had an interim mental health caseweight between the last study and this study. There was new workload. We had a mental health caseweight, but the workload and the caseweight did not match, so we needed to do an interim caseweight for those particular filings. And for this study, we updated that, so that's a more permanent caseweight. Also based on the study findings, we are recommending a consolidated caseweight for infractions. In the previous studies, we had two caseweights for infractions, one for under 100,000 filings and one for courts with over 100,000 filings. In this study, we did not see a difference in the workload for infractions, so we are recommending a consolidated caseweight for infractions. And then another output is that every time that we do the update, we look at that work-year value, that time that staff have available to do their work. And since the last study update, California added an additional holiday, and we also saw a slight increase to the annual leave used by court staff. All right. This is just a graph that shows that work-year value and those differences. So this reflects the change in work-year value, again updated to reflect the leave data based on the 2024 time study and that holiday. So what it reflects is that staff have about 585 fewer minutes or 9.75 fewer hours in their available work year compared to the previous study. All right. So we wanted to talk a little bit just about a few of the key study findings. I think the number one here is number of court transactions do not equal court workload. So the count or number of filings do not equal court workload. So although filings are a key input to the model, the use of weighted caseload methodology captures the workload and time associated with the different types of case filings. The second finding is case complexity overall is increasing in many case types. In some case types, we do see a decrease or no change, but in many we saw that the workload and time associated with those filings is increasing. And then there's also a few other workload impacts that we will highlight as well. All right. So this next slide highlights that first finding, that difference between unweighted and weighted filings. So the top half, everything

above that middle blue line presents filings, data by case type. So on the left are the types of cases and the filings, and then that top right pie chart is the proportion of those filings. And you can see here that infractions relative to other filings is about 58 or almost 60 percent of total filings. And then all the other case types combined are about 42 percent. And then if you look below the blue line, the bottom half of the slide illustrates the impact of applying caseweights to those filings. When filings are weighted by their corresponding caseweights, infractions account for just 8 percent of workload. So I think this shift highlights how infractions, despite their high numbers, contribute significantly less to total workload, dropping them from a top-ranking case type in terms of total volume to a much lower ranking in terms of workload. All right. So this slide is a conceptual model to demonstrate the general trends in case complexity and highlights the second study finding that we are seeing, that complexity of workload is increasing across the courts. Overall, the complexity of workload offsets the decline in filings, but I also want to note that we are seeing that after a substantial decrease in filings during COVID, we are starting to see a slight uptick in filings statewide. But I will turn it over to Judge Hinrichs to speak about the complexity of workload with her experience and expertise in her court.

>> So I want to share some examples of changes in complexity, but first I want to give you an analogy. Think about, I'm going to age myself a bit, a rotary telephone connected to the wall that you can't even walk around the house while you're talking, to a cell phone that started out in a bag you carried around if you wanted to use it, to the mini computers that we have in our pockets now. That really is, in some ways, the discussion about the changing complexity of our cases. For those of you with any experience in criminal law, cases used to be just determining guilt or not guilty, and for those that were guilty, sentencing them, and then the case was done. If the individual was sentenced to prison, it really was done. It could be appealed, of course, but it was closed in our local courts unless it came back, and we didn't have any further dealings with that. Criminal felony matters have two real clear examples of increased case complexity for our trial courts and staff related to postjudgment sentencing and the Racial Justice Act. Resentencing causes a case previously sentenced to return to trial court. There are a number of avenues to seek relief. As it relates to the workload, it generally starts with the request for resentencing, which requires both judicial but also staff time, and then, if appropriate, the case comes back, counsel is appointed, there are pretrial hearings, there are filings that need to be filed and reviewed, and potentially then, an additional evidentiary hearing. The Racial Justice Act was enacted to address racial disparities in our criminal justice system, which is an important aspect of justice for all, but we have to recognize that to do so increases the workload of our staff in a number of ways that also can include court hearings and potentially an evidentiary hearing. In both criminal felony and misdemeanor diversions, which are, as we heard from our collaborative courts, certainly an important part of what we can do for our communities, it adds complexity to the court workload. There are many types of diversion, but all require additional hearings, filings, and some additional evidentiary hearings in some of those case types. Another area of change is in juvenile justice cases; the most serious cases were sent to the Department of Juvenile Justice and again, closed as far as the workload in the trial courts, now stay, and I think anyone that is dealing with that recognized that the youth are

getting sort of more hands-on, more access back into their community in a positive way, but it does propose a whole slew of additional workload for the trial courts in that area. And then when it comes to domestic violence restraining orders over the past 25 years, that's DV 100, which is the request for domestic violence restraining orders, has undergone many changes. Some to increase readability and ease of use, but most resulting in new laws that reflect public policy decisions to enhance victim safety, family members, and the public as well as to reduce the financial harm to victims. A closer study of the four versions of that restraining order request form from 1999, 2006, 2016, and 2025 shows how the form has evolved over the years. There were 13 possible orders in 1999, and now 24 possible orders in 2025. Each order has corresponding workflows for superior court staff, and some orders trigger a whole new area of workflow. These examples demonstrate how complexity increases the workflow for our staff. They were captured in our time study and reflected increase in caseweights in those areas. While these changes were enacted to improve justice for all, we again must recognize that it impacts the complexity of the work for our courts and impacts workload.

>> All right, thank you, Judge. So this brings us to a third finding from the study. Just some further noted impacts to workload. Through a series of focus groups with court staff that participated in the time study, those subject matter experts shared their feedback on the caseweights, their insights to what's impacting workload, and further confirmed the study findings. They noted as well recent legislation that has generated cases coming back to the court. This results in more touches to a case, and therefore more time spent on a case. Feedback during these sessions also noted that post-COVID staff turnover and staff shortages have increased. They noted staff are staying at their job less time, resulting in loss of institutional knowledge and a state of constant training. The Data Analytics Advisory Committee will continue to review these workload impacts and changes in the court environment and may make periodic adjustments to the model to reflect current conditions in the court environment. All right. As we wrap it up, I wanted to take a moment to highlight a couple of areas of committee discussion as we were reviewing the model. During the review of preliminary caseweights, the committee had asked staff to go back to do additional data gathering to review and conduct focus groups with court leadership and with subject matter experts to further validate the results and to better understand what was generated and changing in the caseweights. This was an important process that further validated the changes that we see now reflected in the caseweights. And then, in addition, these discussions led to an item being considered in the committee's work plan with regard to a change in how the model is structured, having to do with understanding the impact of authorized judicial positions on a court's workload need. A similar item was brought to the committee through the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee's adjustment request process, the ARP process, and these items will be discussed by the committee in the coming year. All right. And this table is just a table of the caseweights under consideration and compared to the current caseweights and the percentage difference of those caseweights. As we noted, the majority, over half of the caseweights, increased or stayed the same, while a few others did, we did see a decrease in workload or the time associated with those caseweights or those case types. And in terms of next steps, if approved, the updated caseweights will be used to assess the RAS full-time

equivalent need for use in the fiscal year 2025-26 workload formula. And then also, DAAC will continue to review the model and may recommend interim adjustments if needed. I will turn it over to Judge Hinrichs for closing remarks.

>> Before we take questions, I'd like to acknowledge the work of our committee members and the support and exemplary work of the JCC staff assigned to work with DAAC. It's my honor to serve with these individuals. I also want to add that this time study was for court staff, and we will be conducting the judicial time study in the upcoming year, which is an important part of the complete picture of resource allocation. So are there any questions?

>> Thank you for your excellent presentation and all the work that you have put into this. I'll open it up for questions. Yes, Judge Brodie.

>> Thank you. So, given that infractions are such, they're kind of an outlier in terms of number of filings, it would seem that even small adjustments to that caseweight in particular could have potentially big impacts on the workload calculations for a court. I know that the courts around the state, it seems to me that the processes by which infractions are, you know, taken in, handled by staff, varies a great deal in terms of the amount of automation that a court may or may not have, how many processes are just done manually, sometimes because the volume doesn't support automating those processes, and courts, they just are at different stages on their technological journey for that. How did you capture that sort of diversity in how courts process infractions in particular? Or am I exaggerating the different levels of work that's done in the courts on infractions?

>> I think the short answer is that you may be exaggerating it a bit because the time study was across various-sized courts, and they really have picked up in the automation, even in the smaller courts, and so the time per infraction is really much closer. That's why one number seems to make more sense than the previous numbers when we broke them down into numbers of filings.

>> This was an area, too, where the committee asked staff to go back and examine that more closely with focus groups from the courts that participated to validate that exact point. And whereas in the past, there were real differences in automation, mostly attuned to court size, those differences seem to be less apparent this time around. Definitely something that we will continue to watch, because you're right, by volume it is a big number of, there is a large number of volume associated with that workload, but we did go back on that one and do some additional research.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you. Justice Boulware Eurie.

>> Thank you, Chief. If I may, on the slide that you have the difference in percentages, if I understood it correctly, juvenile justice has a 73 percent difference? Did I understand that correctly?

>> Yes.

>> You're right.

>> So is that, it seems to me that's a function of, you mentioned before, Judge Hinrich, some of the changes, particularly for DJJ realignment, but I also assume that significant increase is tied to things like the transfer hearings themselves taking significantly longer because of the complexity and increase in types of evidence that have to be presented. Am I understanding that correctly, that that's a reflection of some of those legislative changes that not only change the complexity but the duration of these types of cases?

>> Yes. That's exactly right. You couldn't cover all those in the examples, but there is a level of complexity in juvenile justice that has, and we went back and looked at it again with checking back with the studies, and it does reflect that kind of additional workload within our courts.

>> Okay. Thank you very much.

>> Thank you.

>> Yes, Mr. Yamasaki.

>> Thank you very much. Just want to say thank you very much for such a comprehensive presentation, and my remarks are not so much questions but observations. One of the things that the report did is it affirmed kind of our intuitive experience with how long it's taking us to process cases. It is substantially more so. But also, you provided additional information, and the example that you showed was related to domestic violence processes and procedures and requirements that we have. It is extensively much more complicated to process the cases that we have. Quite honestly, we have, in the past, expressed how much longer it takes us to process things, but you have assembled information that provides substantial backup to what you have found, and I know that has taken a lot more this round, but it was really a response to some of the inquiries that came about from this body, and I just wanted to say thank you for being as comprehensive as you were, because it did answer many questions that I think will be very helpful as we present the information to other bodies and entities that need to have information to understand what has happened to the courts, and I just want to say thank you, as well as to other courts who participated in the study, this is plus, in addition to the normal duties that they have. I know it was very burdensome, so burdensome that Orange could only participate in one case type because it was so challenging. But I just want to thank all of the other trial courts who participated because it was a very, very heavy lift, and you all captured the information so well. So, thank you.

>> Thank you. Anyone else? Yes, Mr. Parker.

>> Thank you, Chief. Slide number 19 is a really useful chart. It's different than the slide that we have in our materials for today. Is that going to be published someplace else? This is a really helpful comparison, and that percentage difference is helpful for us applying those weights to our own workload analysis in our own courts.

>> We can find a way to make it available.

>> Thank you.

>> I had the same thought. Thank you. Anyone else? I'll entertain a motion to move approval of this item.

>> I'd be happy to. Oh, I'm sorry.

>> Okay, first, I heard Justice Boulware Eurie. A second?

>> Second.

>> Raise your hand, or identify yourself. Yes, Mr. Yamasaki. Thank you. All in favor, say aye. Any nos or abstentions? Thank you, the item is approved. Thank you again for your presentation and all your work.

>> Thank you.

>> Third, we have a report for consideration, our Tactical Plan for Technology for 2025-2026. We welcome our presenters, Judge Sheila Hanson, chair of the Information Technology Advisory Committee, and Mr. Brian, is it Cotta?

>> Cotta.

>> Cotta, Thank you. Sorry, Information Technology Advisory Committee as well. Thank you.

>> Good morning, Chief Justice Guerrero and members of the Judicial Council. We are here today to present the update to our branch Tactical Plan for Technology. Updating this plan is an activity we do every two years to ensure the branch is making progress and doing so in an intentional, collaborative, and cohesive manner. As the Chief indicated, I'm joined today by Brian Cotta, who is from the Fifth District Court of Appeal. He was also an active member of the workstream, as well as Daphne Light, an IT principal manager at the council and advisor during this process. Updating the tactical plan is the responsibility of the Information Technology Advisory Committee, of which I am the chair, and this is the sixth update since the

council established a more structured technology governance model nearly 10 years ago. In presenting to you today, we will provide context on how this plan fits and aligns within the technology governance model, along with how we made decisions about what to include. We will highlight the tactical initiatives and what has changed since the last version. Last, we will cover who was involved in this process because it is truly a branchwide effort, before inviting your questions and requests for approval. This is the vision statement that is established in our Strategic Plan for Technology and sets the tone for what we, as a branch, are trying to achieve. Through a collaboration and innovation and initiative, we are focused on using technology to improve access to justice and improve services to our court customers. To achieve that vision, we have established a technology governance model, which you see represented on the slide. On the left, you see how our goals cascade from the branch to the project level, and on the right, our guiding documents. At the highest two levels are our strategic plans, both generally and specific to technology. These define the why. Why, as a branch, are we doing what we do? The tactical plan identifies the what, meaning what do we need to do to achieve our goals? And through our projects at the council, our committee, and through the branch community, we determine how to deliver what's needed. In recent years, the branch has been extremely successful in obtaining IT funding from the state and moving not just individual courts but the branch as a whole forward technologically, and we believe that the technology governance model and structure in place helps us do that. It is deliberative. It is cohesive. As you saw from the previous slide, the Strategic Plan for Technology is updated every four years, and it is the guide, the resource that provides us with the vision and investment for continuous technology progress. Again, the goals within the strategic plan are focused on the why of what we are trying to achieve. The current strategic plan aims to advance the digital court, promote equal access to digital services, innovate through community, advance IT security and infrastructure, and advocate for rule and legislative changes that enable this work. We use these for guidance as we seek to update the tactical plan every two years. It makes sense, then, that the tactical plan outlines the more detailed initiatives, the what the branch is pursuing. The tactical plan initiatives support these broader goals to help ensure we achieve our desired outcome. Now that we have some background about our technology governance structure, I am going to turn to our new proposed Tactical Plan for Technology. We are providing key considerations and noteworthy highlights for you today; however, the full plan is in your meeting materials for this meeting. This is the second update aligned with our current strategic plan, which means that our intent was to update and refine rather than to overhaul the entire plan. When selecting initiatives to include, we continue to focus on those that have a branchwide impact, expand online services, support access to justice, have significant financial and business value, need financial or strategic advocacy, and sustain our momentum of innovation in the courts. Of course, there are many more initiatives that could be listed in the plan, but the idea here is to focus our plan so that it conveys those initiatives that have the strongest impact and displays cohesiveness within the branch. The California courts connected framework displayed on this slide is an illustration of the business function supported by the technology within the courts. And I'm sorry, I didn't mean this as a vision test. I recognize the type is very small. But I wanted to share this visual to highlight that there are five areas which lead us as to how we organize the plan. Namely, we were looking at foundational systems, integrations, public and partner

services, data, and security and infrastructure. With that in mind, we will now turn to the next slide, and to Mr. Cotta for the deeper dive into the topics we included in the tactical plan.

>> Thanks, Judge Hanson. Good morning, Chief and members of the council. These are the proposed initiatives, as you can see on the screen, which are organized across the five categories Judge Hanson just referenced, plus one additional category. In the last column on the right, you can see the new category initiative on emerging technology that's being introduced this year. I will go into more detail about that soon, later in the presentation. As Judge Hanson mentioned, your materials include the full plan that describes each of these initiatives in detail and their approach to moving the branch forward in these areas. Each topic was updated on progress since the last plan, envisioning next steps and incorporating input from subject matter experts and members of our workstream. To help paint an understanding and perhaps give you a better example of what our work consisted of, we would like to further highlight two of the existing initiatives that remain in the plan, along with the newest addition to the plan. And with that, we will first dive into electronic evidence management, which falls under the public partner services pillar. The goal of the electronic evidence initiative is to streamline evidence handling, update rules of court, and implement secure, scalable technology. Like many of our initiatives, the topic was included in the last plan. Since then, ITAC studied courts piloting various technologies, rules, and practices. That was helpful as we found that courts are still in the early stages of electronic evidence management, with many courts seeking solutions and guidance. The data shown on this slide highlights this need. As of January, 13 trial courts reported progress in this area, which was up from 5 in 2023. While this is an improvement, there is currently still work to be done. ITAC plans to convene a new workstream to continue our evaluation of solutions and determine if branchwide agreements would be helpful to courts. For these reasons, electronic evidence management remains a key initiative in our plan. Next, I'll go over the branchwide information security initiative that you can see under the security and infrastructure pillar. We heard a little bit on that earlier and how important that is. This initiative focuses on promoting effective branchwide information security. As we know, security breaches undermine public confidence and judicial integrity. Additionally, cyber threats and similar incidents can disrupt court proceedings, delay justice, and halt digital services that are critical to court users. Thus, it's important and should come as no surprise that cyber and information security is a key priority for the branch and is a subject we will continue to focus on. In recent years, the branch has prioritized security education, awareness, and various services to courts. As security risks evolve, so does our need to continually maintain and harden critical court systems. We formed a dedicated branchwide governance body for information security policy. All of this is, obviously, important and contributes to our maintaining public trust and confidence in the courts. Looking at the data on this slide, we see that 36 courts reported information security as their top priority this coming fiscal year, with 18 indicating a need for additional funding. This is why a comprehensive information security program remains critical in the tactical plan. Last, I will go over emerging technologies, which is the new initiative for this year, or for this plan. Here on the slide, you can see we highlight our newest addition to the plan, as I mentioned, and that's in regard to emerging technologies, which is a program aimed at systematically exploring, evaluating, and implementing emerging

technologies that align with the Chief's initiative and strategic objectives. Following the Chief's lead in establishing an Artificial Intelligence Task Force, the intent is to improve court efficiencies and enhance services for the public. Courts are already signaling strong interest in this space. As part of the IT modernization program, 10 courts submitted 15 proposals that incorporate AI to improve operations and access to justice. This level of engagement certainly highlights both the momentum and the practical value across the branch. Including this initiative in the tactical plan provides space for thoughtful, systematic exploration of new tools that reimagine and reshape how services are delivered across the branch. With that, I'll finally turn it back to Judge Hanson. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Brian. Turning back to an overarching look at our work, the workstream updated the new tactical plan largely by sustaining its existing initiatives, reaffirming that basic concepts are still relevant, and maintaining strategic momentum, updating and refining the existing initiatives to reflect progress and clarity, introducing a dedicated emerging technology initiative for responsible and strategic adoption, and overall continuing to simplify or try to use plain language for broader understanding and impact. Lastly, I'd like to express acknowledgment of the terrific participation and engagement we had in developing this plan. As with all of our work, ITAC assembled a workstream from volunteers from throughout the branch. It consisted of members representing a cross section of perspectives, as you can see. We engaged court participants at all levels, from judicial officers to court executives to IT leaders, as well as with council staff. We had representation from both the appellate and trial courts and courts of various sizes and demographics. I am very grateful to everyone who took part in the work. Our discussions were robust, they were thoughtful, and it's clear that the members of the group understood the value of this plan. It's not something that is simply meant to stay on a shelf but is rather something to be used over and over again to guide us, to allow us to align and advocate for court technology in support of justice. I think I speak on behalf of all of the members when I say we are very much invested in the final product. This does conclude our presentation. I would invite members to please refer to your materials for the full report and contents of the plan. With that, we are happy to take any questions you might have.

>> Thank you, also, for your wonderful presentation and your thoughtful consideration of these important issues and the recommendation that is before us. We appreciate it. I open it up for questions or discussion. Yes, Mr. Parker.

>> Thank you, Chief. I was really happy to see that you highlighted the need for cybersecurity and the fact that that's a priority among the courts. But it's not a priority I want to have. Given the limited resources, I would rather be spending that money on the retention and recruitment and development of court staff. But it really points out this emerging area and strain on the court's budget, over which we have no control. And we have to invest in order to maintain that access to justice. So I appreciate the work, and I am really glad you pointed that out.

>> Thank you, Mr. Parker.

>> Thank you. Any questions or comments? Judge Moorman.

>> I have a comment, maybe at the other end of the spectrum from that mentioned by Mr. Parker. I wanted to thank you. The report, first of all, is excellent. And the reason why none of us should leave it on the shelf is because if you read it and read it again, it elevates our practical application of evolving terminology. And I think it's very hard for judicial officers, I'll speak for myself, sometimes over the years to keep up with the evolution of technology and the nomenclature that goes along with it. And as a body that is constantly challenging ourselves to identify data that we want to collect, report, preserve, and secure, this dovetails into that. So I want to say the report reflects an enormous amount of work, and thank you. Thank you, thank you. And the other end of the spectrum comment I want to say is, thank you for keeping the continued focus on improving electronic evidence, because that's a day-to-day problem in the trial courts that we're, I'll just fall on the sword, still really struggling with. So thank you for that. And I'll move approval of the recommendation.

>> Thank you, Judge Moorman. Further discussion?

>> I was just going to make one other comment. One thing I wanted to emphasize that I think is maybe an underappreciated aspect of the report. First, it's fantastic to see the community coming together and building the report. I was fortunate enough to participate in the workstream. And the diversity of experience, of perspectives, really makes the product better. But I think one of the secret weapons, if you will, of the report is when we discuss the metrics for success. Like how do we know if we are succeeding? Because we launch these initiatives, and we, you know, are we struggling with it? Of course, because some of this is very difficult. But we keep trying. But how do we know if we're actually making the kind of progress we want? So a lot of the more robust discussions were about what are our metrics for success. I think that's exceptionally useful in kind of holding ourselves accountable, right, for making sure we are marching in the right direction. I want to thank you for all the work you do. It's a lot. And the work product shows it, so thank you.

>> Thank you, Judge Brodie.

>> Second.

>> Yes, I wanted to make sure. Thank you. We got a first from Judge Moorman, second from Judge Brodie. All in favor, say aye. Thank you. Any nos or abstentions? The item is approved. Thank you very much. Now for our fourth item, we have an update on jury instructions and the juror experience. This is item number 25-095. We welcome our presenters here today. Justice Adrienne Grover, chair of the Advisory Committee on Civil Jury Instructions. Welcome. And we have Judge Jeffrey Ross, he's the chair of the Court Executives Advisory Committee. No, that's not right. No, it's a CALCRIM. I know that. My notes are wrong, but I remember that. It's nice to see you.

>> Thank you.

>> And we have Mr. Darrel Parker from the Court Executives Advisory Committee. Welcome to all of you.

>> Thank you, Chief. Good morning, council members. We are here to talk to you this morning about the council's work to improve jury service and the jury system. And so jury service really relates to several important aspects of the council's mission, specifically in delivering fairness and justice for litigants and also then making the jury experience accessible and understandable for jurors. Later in our presentation, we're also going to talk about some very current efforts in eliminating bias and how the instructions are being developed on that topic, and also Darrel will be talking about some ongoing efforts to make jurors more aware of implicit bias as well, including a video that has been made that's available on the court's website. So, as the Chief has noted in her comments in the jury orientation video that has been produced, really, jury service is an opportunity for jurors to participate directly in government, and indeed, it's an opportunity for them to engage directly with the Constitution. So if we're going to be asking lay members of the community from a cross section of the community to come in and serve, we really owe it to them to make sure that the process is understandable, accessible, easy, even, and that the language that we use in court is understandable, and that starts with the summons and goes all the way through instructions and verdict forms. So our presentation today is going to highlight some of the council's work to make jury service more accessible through plain-language instructions and some innovative programs that we'll describe later as well. And so these efforts, obviously, benefit jurors in the first instance, but they also benefit litigants by ensuring that there is a fair and just application of the law to their case. And I'll just also mention that even beyond the use of instructions in jury trials, the instructions are an important tool for attorneys and judges in bench trials but also just as a clear articulation of what the basics of the law in any given area are. They also help make the system more accessible to self-represented litigants. If you are representing yourself in a civil matter, you can look to those jury instructions to see what do I have to prove or refute. If you are exercising your right to represent yourself in a criminal matter, you can look to the instructions to see what is it that you can expect the prosecution will have to prove. So in that way, the plain-language jury instructions also help to eliminate barriers for self-represented litigants. I will go ahead and begin with a little bit of background and history on the movement toward plain-language instructions. This really began with the appointment and work of a blue-ribbon commission on jury system improvement, and that 26-member commission brought forth something like 60 recommendations, and out of that, in 1997, came the development of a task force on jury instructions, and there was a subcommittee of 18 members working on civil jury instructions and a subcommittee of 18 members working on criminal jury instructions, and here I have to give a shout-out to our plain-language mentor, Justice Corrigan, who was chair of the criminal subcommittee. And to this enormous task, moving from the long-used BAJI, Book of Approved Jury Instructions for civil trials, and CALJIC, the California Jury Instructions-Criminal, this enormous volume, and moving that all toward a plain-language approach. Overall, there have been two goals then, and they remain true now for our subcommittees. Foremost,

uncompromising accuracy in terms of how the law is expressed, even in plain-language terms. And then secondly, making them understandable in these plain-language terms, and of course, the work, starting with the task force and the initial instructions and ongoing with our subcommittee work, it is an iterative process. So it's important that each release, twice per year, as you know, for each of our subcommittees, is released for public comment, and we do rely on public comments, certainly users' comments, to alert us to changes that we might still need to make, refinements and work that needs to be done. So these early efforts ultimately produced CACI, the civil instructions in 2003, and CALCRIM, the plain-language instructions in 2005. I'll note that also, these new forms of plain-language instructions are quite inclusive, in that you can imagine if you are a prospective juror or a sworn juror serving and English isn't your primary language, think how much easier it is and how much more confident you will feel in your ability to serve in that role if the language of the instructions is oriented toward a plain-language approach. As the council is aware, each of us comes to you with a release twice a year that reflects new developments in case law, new legislation, sources from comments that we receive from the public, and we refine those and bring those to you, and just on this score, I do want to mention the exceptional service that we receive from our lead staff to our committees. They are monitoring all of the various developments in the law all the time, come to us with recommendations, and the most amazing thing is, in real time, during our committee meetings, they follow the various discussions that are going on and display everything on the screen where one member says, well, that says because of. I think it needs to say due to, and things on that level, and following it in real time. We really rely on them and appreciate them, certainly. Before I turn things over to Judge Ross to talk about some of our current efforts, I will give you a couple of examples of plain language and the evolution there. This one, former users of CALJIC will remember, I'm sure, reading or hearing this many times: Failure of recollection is common. Innocent misrecollection is not uncommon. Seems straightforward enough until you look at the plain-language version: People often forget things or make mistakes in what they remember. So you can see how much simpler it is to follow and, more importantly, apply law that is articulated for you in a plain-language approach. The vocabulary, the structure, they are direct, they are familiar, not legalistic, and this one I particularly like because you'll know that we have eliminated a triple negative from the earlier instruction. Misrecollection is not uncommon. So here is another instruction from the civil side, the earlier language: The amount of caution required of a person whose physical faculties are impaired is the care which a person of ordinary prudence with similarly impaired faculties would use under circumstances similar to those shown by the evidence. Language only a lawyer could love. So here's the plain-language instruction: A person with a physical disability is required to use the amount of care that a reasonably careful person who has the same physical disability would use in the same situation. So goes without saying the improvements there. I'll note also, I like this example because it also demonstrates the elimination of bias toward people with disabilities, and we're using person-first language, which is preferred, so that is also an improvement there. So I will turn it over to Judge Ross.

>> Thank you. Good morning, Chief Justice Guerrero, my predecessor in this role. And good morning to the members of the council and to the staff. Justice Grover provided some history

and articulated the goals of CACI and CALCRIM. I brought them in case you haven't seen them so you understand the volume of work that we do. This is CACI, and this is CALCRIM. Before I go on to the presentation, I, too, want to acknowledge Justice Corrigan. We invoke you at our meetings regularly.

>> That's always a mistake. [Laughter]

>> We don't make mistakes, as you know. But the principles that you articulate, which are in our first volume every time we produce it, are the ones that guide our thoughts as to how we accomplish the goals that Justice Grover described. So let's go to the slide, and you'll see at the bottom, in the middle, is the Judicial Council. So you see our work at the end, after all the work has been done, but I want to walk you through quickly, starting in the upper left, the user input, the case authority, the legislation, that is the source material from which we create or revise our instructions. But the heavy lifting, the truly heavy lifting, and I mean it, as you'll see in a moment, does come from our staff attorneys, Kara Portnow and Eric Long, who is somewhere. In any event, and when I say heavy lifting, I mean it, because I brought to you my version. Most of us use electronic, but I'm old, I use paper. This is what we dealt with in our meeting on Monday. This is what we had to do, and it's created by our staff attorneys. They take the legislation, they take the new authorities that the appellate courts give us, and input from judges and lawyers and create a binder. And from that binder, the working group meets, usually for one day; this year, it took two to get through that binder. We then synthesize the work and decide which of the proposed instructions should be presented to the full committee, and we wordsmith them. And we follow the admonition from 20 years ago, and we make sure that things are stated as succinctly as possible, as clearly as possible, but of course, always accurately. And the discussions are fascinating. I have always said that it's the best job I've ever had because you sit in a room with people, and when you sit around the table, you don't know who the prosecutor is, who is the defense lawyer, who's the judge. We sit around as a group of colleagues trying to achieve the same goal: clarity and accuracy, and I think we succeed. So the process goes through the analysis, the workgroup meets, the full group meets, then we put it out for public comment, and frequently the comments are quite helpful. We integrate them where appropriate, we revise as necessary, then we submit them to you. That's what you see when you get it. So let's go to the next slide, please. You see the array of work that we do, you see the volume of work we do. Next slide, please. So we have spoken today, we will be speaking more about the importance of trying to identify and then eliminate bias. And I told you that the sources of our instructions come from many places, and in this particular instance, in 2023, the California Judges Association sent us a proposed implicit bias instruction and a packet of materials which included the rationale for that instruction but also similar instructions from other courts, other states. And so we formed a group to consider that, and we realized that there is not just a legal aspect here. but there's a sociological and psychological aspect. We did something I think is unprecedented, and that is that we actually invited a social scientist to join us to look at the materials and see from that perspective how would the information we are going to be imparting to the prospective jurors be received by people, and how can we achieve our goals. We had someone from the Social Psychological Answers to Real-World Questions,

also known as SPARQ, from Stanford, a title only an academic could devise, and she reviewed our materials beforehand and afterward to give us her sense as to how the information would be received. So we had a couple of goals. We wanted to ensure that the new instructions would educate jurors about implicit bias and provide effective tools to help them avoid implicit bias that would impact their deliberations. But, and this was the critical issue, we wanted to avoid any unintended backlash effect. We didn't want to inadvertently cause jurors to feel defensive or resistant to the ideas and tools that we presented. So today's presentation is about the jury experience. We are going to invite you now to imagine you're jurors in our courtroom. Sit back. If you came into my court, if I were trying a criminal case, at the outset of the case, because of the work we did, as part of Instruction 101, which is the first one we read, I would include the following: Although we are aware of some of our biases, we may not be aware of all of them. We refer to those biases as implicit or unconscious. They may be based on stereotypes we would reject if they were brought to our attention. Implicit or unconscious biases can affect how we perceive others and how we make decisions without our being aware of their effect. So that paragraph, which we read at the beginning of the trial to alert them to the issue, is then repeated in 209. I should say that our 209 and 5030 CACI instructions are similar because we, I omitted to mention that we collaborated with the CACI committee. We went first because our schedule is ahead of theirs. We got it. We reviewed it. We came up with a proposal, and then we sent it to you. We got your comments back, and we incorporated your comments. I haven't put them side to side recently, but I think they are really quite similar. So we read that instruction at the beginning, and I am going to take a moment and read to you the instruction at the end, because we pointed out we wanted to accomplish a couple of goals, and one was to inform the jurors without making them defensive. I hope you agree we achieved our goal. Our brains help us navigate and respond quickly to events by grouping and categorizing people, places, and things. We all do this. These mental shortcuts are helpful in some situations, but in the courtroom, they may lead to biased decision-making. Bias can affect what we notice and pay attention to, what we see and hear, what we remember, how we perceive people, and how we make decisions. We may favor or be more likely to believe people whom we see as similar to us, with whom we identify. Conversely, we may disfavor or be less likely to believe people whom we see as different. I mentioned that we wanted to give the jurors some tools: How do you take these concepts and try to identify your biases and not allow them to make your decisions? So we came up with three suggestions. I will read them to you now. First, reflect carefully and thoughtfully about the evidence. Think about why you are making each decision, and examine it for bias. Resist the urge to jump to conclusions or to make judgments based on personal likes or dislikes, generalizations, prejudices, stereotypes, or biases. Consider your initial impressions of the people, that's number two, and the evidence in this case. Would your impressions be different if any of the people were, for example, of a different age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or national origin? Was your opinion affected because a person has a disability or speaks a language other than English, or with an accent? Think about the people involved in the case as individuals. Focusing on individuals can help you reduce the effect of stereotypes on decision-making. Number three, listen to the other jurors. Their backgrounds, experiences, and insights may be different from yours. Hearing and sharing different perspectives may help identify and eliminate biased conclusions. Are you ready to deliberate?

The next slide, I also said that the source of our instructions is changes in the legislation, and I think the most challenging thing we had to deal with was Senate Bill 567. As many of you know, when imposing a felony sentence, a judge has to choose from three possible terms. The midterm, which is presumptive, the lower term if there are mitigating factors, and then the upper term if there are aggravating factors. Up until 2021, we as judges looked at the list of 17 aggravating factors, listened to the evidence, read the sentencing memo, and decided whether or not the evidence supported finding aggravating factors, and in that case, we could impose the higher sentence. With this legislation, that task was put to the jury, and so our assignment was to look at the 17 aggravating factors to decide which ones needed jury instructions, and we picked 11. The task was challenging because the instructions had to both be clear and representative, but the aggravating factors, which are the rules, the rules of court, rule 4.421 set forth in the instructions, they were written for sophisticated judges frequently having to make comparisons between the conduct in this case and other cases they had tried, and we had that knowledge as judges. Now we are asking jurors who are presumably hearing their first felony trial to make similar kinds of comparisons. Let me give you some examples of why it was challenging for us. One of the aggravating factors is A1, the crime involved great violence, great bodily harm, threat of great bodily harm, or other acts disclosing a high degree of cruelty, viciousness, or callousness. Well, as judges, we can make comparisons to other cases. This is their first case. Or the victim was particularly vulnerable. Or, another one, A3, the crime involved an attempted or actual taking of damage of great monetary value. Or the last example, the crime involved a large quantity of contraband. So the challenge for the committee was how do you put those terms into an instruction that the jury can apply and then decide whether there is sufficient evidence to find, beyond a reasonable doubt, the presence of that particular factor. So I hope you think we have succeeded. We will continue working on them. We are going to be writing some more, which you will be getting because we want to add to some of the other additional factors. Thank you. I'll stop.

>> Thank you, Judge Ross. I'm Darrel Parker, the court executive officer in Santa Barbara Superior Court. The court executive officers are also simultaneously the jury commissioners for all of the counties. And until recently, I chaired the Judicial Administration Management Subcommittee, which recently has been taken over by Jake Chatters in Placer County. And our committee has been working on a number of things, but we are going to go back a little bit and talk about how the Judicial Council is improving the juror experience in California. The council has overseen an arc of consistent jury improvement in the last 30 years, beginning with the blue-ribbon commission in the late 1990s. It includes a variety of initiatives from publishing educational videos for jury orientation to implementing the AB 1981 jury pilot program testing the impact of jury per diems on diversity and participation. Those are just a couple of samples that we wanted to highlight for today. The blue-ribbon commission's task included a comprehensive evaluation of the jury system and recommended improvements. In fact, Justice Grover mentioned they recommended over 60 proposals resulting from a combination of public outcry over high-profile cases at that time and existing pressures on the legal system that court administrators were experiencing. The commission was a big-picture initiative to identify the critical reforms needed for the stability and improvement of the jury system. It championed new

breakthrough ideas that we now consider to be statewide standards, from providing juror orientation to utilizing plain-language jury instructions to the handling of hardships and the summoning process. The Task Force on Jury System Improvement was charged with implementing the blue-ribbon commission's recommendations. The task force was formed to implement those recommendations, and it was a group focused on jury operations, administration, and management collaborating with thousands of stakeholders and our two sister branches of government. Its work ultimately established hundreds of new norms in the jury system, from the one-day-or-one-trial method that we all take for granted today to increasing per diems to developing a model jury summons to creating a tool kit for addressing failures to appear. On the screen in front of you, on the left-hand side, is the old jury summons, still in place in many counties. And I am holding one up now. It's a long form. And when I first became the jury commissioner about 13 years ago, my daughter received a jury summons, that long form, and she opened it up in the kitchen with my wife and I standing there, and she looked at it and almost disgustingly threw it on the table and said, I'm not reading that. I said, You can't do that. I'm the jury commissioner. She turned to me incredulously and said, You're responsible for that? Why isn't there a QR code or something on that? Why can't I go to YouTube? On the right-hand side, you'll see a sample of a jury summons from San Diego in use now. It's a postcard. And many of the council members here today sat down to find a jury summons at your workplace. This is the result of my daughter's comments. This is the postcard that Santa Barbara now uses to summons jurors. We send out about 2,000 of these every week to put jurors on call, and on the back, to my son's objection, is a small QR code, which we're going to make much larger in the near future. But it is the result of statewide initiatives and the work of the task force and the blue-ribbon commission that resulted in improvements like this. For many people, the only experience that they have had with a jury is on TV or in the movies. Juror orientation videos play an important role in outlining the jury process, the role of the juror, and juror expectations. It's incumbent on the courts to ensure that all jurors who serve have a fundamental understanding of these concepts in order to serve fairly and effectively. The Judicial Council released the original juror orientation video in 2002, entitled *Ideals Made Real*. It was the first video of its kind used in California to help standardize the jury orientation process required by California Code of Civil Procedure section 214. The council released a new and updated video in 2022, which is available free of cost to all courts statewide. At the same time, a new jury service history video called *A More Perfect Jury* was released as a companion to the video *Justice for All*. It provides jurors with information about the history and development of jury service over time from English common law through the Batson-Wheeler case and into today's modern system. In 2024 the council, in partnership with the California Judges Association, also adapted a jury service and fairness video for use in California on the topic of implicit bias that has been viewed thousands of times. The AB 1981 jury pilot program was created by that assembly bill, which took effect January of 2023. While its immediate impact was permanently increasing juror mileage reimbursements and creating a new public transit juror reimbursement, its main purpose was to study whether increasing juror compensation will increase diversity and participation. Currently, California statutory per diems are among the lowest in the nation, particularly when accounting for the higher cost of living in many of the state's most populous areas. The state's juror per diems were last raised in 2002.

The per diem increase that most recently began in September 2024 is intended to last until the end of 2026. After that, the Judicial Council will submit a report to the Legislature no later than September 2026 with our findings. And just an interesting note, I don't know why, but North Dakota is the highest state, with jury per diem at \$100 a day. It will be interesting to see those results in California in 2026. There are additional jury improvements going on, like staggering reporting times instead of the cattle call at eight or nine o'clock in the morning, hundreds of jurors. Instead, courts summon jurors at different times of day to manage them more effectively and with more respect for the individual juror's time commitments. Courts are also expanding the use of online portals where jurors check the status of their jury service, submit postponements or hardship requests, as well as review information about jury service. Some courts are offering self-service kiosks that allow individuals to check themselves in with their ID and juror badge number. The Judicial Council has finished piloting a groundbreaking project that offers the first fully electronic per diem payment platform for jurors using the branch's existing relationship with the Bank of America. Courts can use Zelle, I guess it's the counterpart to Venmo, to pay jurors much faster than before without the hassle of a paper check. Staff are preparing to send an announcement to all courts that this option is now available for them to use if they wish and how the JCC can help them set up the platform in their jury divisions. The Tulare court has created a virtual public counter that allows jurors to log in on the website rather than Zoom. And as courthouse construction continues across the state, one area receiving particular focus is the comfort of the jury assembly facilities. Courts are offering more charging stations for personal electronic devices, improving Wi-Fi options, offering more comfortable chairs in quiet rooms. Think of your experience that's improved in the airports. We are finding that now, increasingly, in our jury assembly rooms. All of these improvements are meant to improve the juror experience in ways big and small. By doing so, we'll also improve public perceptions of the judicial branch, as jurors make up the largest volume of people coming through the courts every day. On behalf of Justice Grover and Judge Ross and myself, thank you for your attention today. We are happy to take any questions.

>> Thank you. Can I just, I know there are hands. I just wanted to say thank you so much for all of the work you have done to improve the juror experience. As you indicated, we know that it's important to facilitate that, so that the members of the public can participate and fulfill their civic duties. And thank you, Justice Grover, Judge Ross, for your enthusiasm and staff's careful attention to the important work of preparing the instructions. I know that there is a lot of work that goes into that. I would like to echo what you said and to really thank Justice Corrigan for being at the forefront of this effort as well, and finally, just to apologize for always adding additional work on behalf of the court to your plate. This is really challenging. Perhaps you guys can look at it and take into consideration whether there should be more modifications to the instructions. Justice Corrigan.

>> Only to thank you very much. This is really hard. We spend all of our lives learning and then practicing to think and talk like lawyers, and then we become quite comfortable with saying things like Innocent misrecollection is not uncommon. Makes perfectly good sense. To translate that and make sure you get it right involves sitting in rooms with people who say, You know, I

think we ought to add a comma here, or I think this word is more understandable than that word. See, they know. It is truly a labor of love. And I am very appreciative for you carrying on that work and being so true to the original notion. So thank you very, very much.

>> Thank you. Yes, Judge Crompton.

>> I thank the committee for, obviously, the hard work and also the sensitivity and thoughtfulness that went into it. It's unbelievable. And the jury instruction thing reminds me particularly of, like, the Seinfeld episode where Newman says, It's hard to deliver the mail because it keeps coming and coming and coming. You know, that's the way you guys must feel because, you know, the changes and the adaptations keep coming. I'm lucky enough to be a colleague of Judge Ross. His energy level, his enthusiasm, as the Chief Justice said, you know, it can be disturbing, but [laughter] he employs it here in a way that's so useful to all of us. Really, thank you.

>> Thank you. Judge Apaloo.

>> Thank you, Chief. I wanted to thank Justice Grover and Judge Ross, Mr. Parker, for your mention of CJA. This is like a labor of love for me. It's something so dear to my heart. Before I became CJA president, I was the chair of the Elimination of Bias and Inequality Committee, and from day one, one of the things we wanted to do was get jury instructions done that just alerted people, not to put people on defensive, but to alert people about what we all face and that we all have to deal with. And you all were just so receptive and welcoming to this idea. I know that there was a lot of debate and discussion about how to make it happen. But we really feel heard by you and seen by you with the work that you did with the instructions. When we teach the CJER class on implicit bias for judges, we use the jury instruction as an example of what jurors are hearing. And some judges don't yet know, even though it's a couple years old, some judges don't yet know that it's there, because it traditionally hasn't been there. There hasn't been something traditionally that focuses on civil and criminal with the exact same instruction, because the problem is exactly the same. It has pretty much the exact same instruction, and a lot of judges say, Wow, we didn't know about this, and I wish that when I was a practicing lawyer there was an instruction like this. This is amazing work. So, you know, thank you so much for your support, and kudos to you for doing it. Mr. Parker, thank you for the mention about the video. That was another thing we thought would be a fantastic opportunity for the courts to share with the general public about how is it that you actually do this job of deconstructing your biases. So we are very grateful. On another note, and I'll be really quick, juror experience is also something that's dear to my heart. One of the things I've been working on as CJA president is to work with the general public on their impressions of the court. George Eskin, retired judge, gave me a very passionate speech about going and talking to jurors every day. In San Bernardino County, we have started going and talking to jurors every day. I do it. When I'm here, someone else covers me, but it has really been well received, and I think it bridges the gap between the public and us. When we just go down, spend five minutes talking to them, welcome them, let them know, you are going to see a wonderful video with the

Chief, she is going to tell you everything you need to know about what you are going to expect, but it gets their eyes up, gets their attention going, it gets them engaged first thing in the morning. Maybe I can, you know, give a report on it sometime. But we are really hopeful that we can make a statewide project of it. From the time I leave my bench to the time I return to my bench, it's ten minutes. Everybody can do this. Every judge can do this. Again, thank you for that opportunity, and thank you, Chief, for indulging me.

>> Thank you. Thank you for your comments. Judge Wood.

>> I am going to start with what the previous commenter ended with, which is how important jury service is to our branch because we know that a lot of people that come into the courthouse as a party or litigant or a witness see things through a different lens, but this is the lens that most of our citizens see our branch through and our courthouses through and our court staff. So it's so very important that they have a positive experience. And I would encourage all judges, I get a summons about every two years on the dot. I don't know if other people experience that, but that's my experience. And so it made me realize how important it is to actually go down and see the process and see how our court staff is interacting with prospective jurors, to see the presentation, the videos that are presented to the jurors. So I would encourage all judges to do that. I think it's very important. We follow the same policy that you do. If we are releasing a panel of jurors, maybe a case settled, something like that, a judge goes down and actually speaks to them, explains what happened so they don't think we just unnecessarily brought them into the courthouse and are dismissing them for no reason or cause. And so we're down there speaking to them. And I think it's time well spent. I just really want to thank all of you, not only for the presentation but the work that you do. CALCRIM 209 I am using in my examination of jurors. I use the first part of that instruction to talk about unconscious bias and how our brains work, because I think it helps jurors open up, because oftentimes our jurors come into the courtroom and think, oh, I don't want to say I have a bias. That's a bad thing. And using that instruction, the first part of that instruction, prior to our examination of the jurors, is so helpful to open their understanding and their thoughts about bias and open the communication. So I'm so appreciative of that and I give the full instruction in every one of my cases. Also, I think I really underappreciated your committee's work previously. I have been a jury trial judge for a lot of years, and I rely upon those instructions every day, but I didn't realize how hard they are to draft until January of 2022, when the felony sentencing law changed and we had no instructions on these aggravating factors that we had previously decided, and now we had to instruct the jurors on them. So I took the laboring oar for our court and drafted special instructions before the CALCRIM instructions came out, and my colleagues all used them. Then I was sort of put to shame when the real product came out, because your committee did such a tremendous job on those special instructions. It gave me a realization of how much work goes into drafting those instructions. And so maybe I should thank you because my colleagues, I don't think, ask for my work product so much anymore. I truly do appreciate the work that goes into that. And then, lastly, we are a part of the pilot program for juror compensation in Shasta, and I don't know what the data will show. I truly don't. But it just seems like, from my viewpoint, with my own eyes, it is increasing diversity, because we are in a community that has

a very, very low median income compared to the rest of the state. And so our number of financial hardship requests were huge prior to the pilot program, and we're seeing, it seems to be, a significant reduction in those requests, which I think is resulting in greater diversity, socioeconomic-wise, on our jury panels. So hugely grateful for that and anxious to see what the data will show. So thank you so much for your presentation. Thank you for your very important work.

>> Thank you, Judge Wood. I have, Judge Hallahan raised her hand first, and then Ms. Bieker after that.

>> I am going to be very quick. I want to echo everything everyone else said. It's amazing. And I love the way, Judge Ross, the way you read the jury instruction, because it was more like a teacher. It wasn't accusatory. It wasn't, we know you have biases, please suppress them. It was an acknowledgment that we all are human, and we all bring our life experiences to the court and to juries. So I think that will put people at ease. I think we need to help our judges read a jury instruction like Judge Ross did, because that's where I think the impact is. People sit back and go, oh, okay, I get it. It's not the rote reading the jury instructions like we fall into when we read jury instructions, even at the beginning. So thank you very much for your work, for the program here today. We really appreciate what you do.

>> Thank you.

>> Very quick question. Thank you, Chief. Is the work from the task force, the committee on enhancing the juror experience, continuing? It seemed like it was a very early committee, 1990s. Is it still working on new ideas, fresh ideas?

>> There is still a Jury Administration and Management Subcommittee of the Court Executives Advisory Committee that came about as a result of part of these efforts. But the Task Force on Jury System Improvements, I actually have the report here, because when I first read it, I thought 2004 wasn't that long ago, was it? Turns out that's 21 years ago. So, no, there hasn't been a new report or a new initiative. There is continuing work internally. We are assisted on our committee by Stephen Tow, who is here today, with the office. And we have discussed that. And it's on the JAMS, the Jury Administration and Management Subcommittee's radar. Resources are a little tight right now, but it's certainly on our radar to pursue in the future because it seems 20 years is probably long enough to go back and revisit that subject.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you. Thank you all for your comments here today on this important topic. Again, I thank you for your presentation. We appreciate it.

>> Thank you.

>> Okay. Now, this is the fifth item on our agenda. We have a presentation on the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission. Item 25-097. We welcome our presenters, Ms. Erica Connolly, cochair, Legal Services Trust Fund Commission, and also we welcome Ms. Doan Nguyen, program director for the State Bar Office of Access and Inclusion. Thank you. Whenever you're ready.

>> Good afternoon, Chief Justice Guerrero and members of the Judicial Council. My name is Erica Connolly, I'm one of the two cochairs of the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission. First, I want to express appreciation for the opportunity to inform the Judicial Council about the commission's work. I am also here with Doan Nguyen, program director at the State Bar, who oversees the Trust Fund Commission staff.

>> I want to also take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Judicial Council. Your support the last 25 years has allowed us to provide funding for a network of very strong legal aid programs throughout the state that provide critical free civil legal services to low-income and underserved communities. On behalf of those programs and the low-income clients that they assist, I just want to thank you all.

>> So as reflected in our mission and purpose, at a high level, the commission works to close the justice gap by administering grants that increase legal services to low-income and underserved populations. So this mission and purpose is the product of a recent five-year strategic plan that the commission adopted. The commission has undergone significant growth in the last few years, and we decided to undertake the strategic plan to ensure that the commission was operating efficiently and effectively for our constituents. So the Trust Fund Commission sits within the State Bar and works closely with the bar's Office of Access and Inclusion. The Office of Access and Inclusion, in turn, supports the bar's work, which is disseminating best practices and resources to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession; advancing policies, studies, and innovations to expand access to civil justice; and administering funds for legal aid and public defenders' offices to serve low-income Californians. The commission oversees the Office of Access and Inclusion's work in funding those civil legal services. So as this graph reflects, in the past 10 years, the number of grants and the amount in funding that the commission has administered has grown significantly. For example, in 2024, the commission administered about \$200 million to 110 nonprofits and public defender offices. This includes \$127 million in core funding to address the most pressing civil legal needs in each county. And in 2025, the commission will administer \$313 million to 115 nonprofits and public defender offices. This includes \$283 million in core funding, more than twice as much as in 2024. I will now turn it over to Doan, who's going to provide details about the grants that we administer.

>> The commission administers 10 grant programs. Of those 10, about roughly half of them are in partnership with the Judicial Council and that we have the contract with the Judicial Council to fund on behalf of. So I wanted to highlight a few of those grant programs. So as you all know, the Equal Access Fund was established in 1999, and it added at that time \$10 million to

the court's budget. So revenues from filing fees were added over the years, and due to very successful advocacy over the last five years, the base for our EF funding has increased to about \$32 million annually. So 90 percent of the Equal Access Fund grants are distributed according to an IOLTA statutory formula, which means there are statutory requirements that if a legal services program meets, then they are required to receive funding. This allows a lot of stability over the years, and the vast majority of our programs have been our grantees for 40 years now. There is another 10 percent of that Equal Access funding that's set aside for discretionary partnership grants, and this is a wildly successful program. Partnership grants are partners between our legal aid providers and the courts to provide legal assistance to self-represented litigants. We distributed between \$2 million and \$4 million worth of funding for partnership grants per year, and this funds 40 projects at courthouses throughout California. The partnership grants are relatively small in size but have a very large impact, and through these partnership grants, we are able to assist over 32,000 litigants per year, and our programs are able to provide over 1,800 workshops per year. So then, as you all know, the need for legal services the last few years has increased. Our funding for many years has stabilized at about 100 programs; however, in the last five years, we have gone from 100 programs to 115 programs, and this demonstrates the great need in the state of California now. Of these 115 programs, 95 of them are what's called qualified legal services projects. These are our legal aid programs on the ground; the client comes to the door, needs help with eviction or a public benefits matter. Then in California, what's unique is the network of 22 support centers that provide support services and training and technical assistance to our network of legal aid providers. And in 2023 alone, through our Equal Access Fund grants, we were able to help over 28,000 low-income Californians through attorney-client representation. Through our Equal Access funding grants, we are able to fund over 620 legal aid attorneys. Next slide. So one of our newer grant fundings is the CARE Court grants. So this started in 2023, and the CARE Court grants provide legal representation in CARE Court proceedings. In our first few months of the funding, we provided planning grants worth \$250,000 to 18 grantees. In the first full fiscal year, 2023 to 2024, we were allocated \$21 million that went to a combination of both legal service providers and public defender's offices. In that first year, through the funding, we were able to provide legal representation on 506 matters. The second year, and this, the current fiscal year now, we were allocated \$17 million in CARE Court grants; about a million of that went to legal aid programs, and the remaining \$16 million went to public defender's offices, and in the second year so far, we have opened an additional 87 cases. Next slide, please. This shows you the top three areas of law that have been kind of the most prevalent using the Equal Access Fund grants. Not surprising: housing, family law, domestic violence prevention, and immigration. And then the last grants that I wanted to highlight are homeless prevention grants, which began in 2019. For that year, we received \$20 million. It was intended as one-year funding; however, with the generosity of the Legislature, we renewed that funding for the last five years. Unfortunately, that funding stream has ended last December, and many of our programs have had to discontinue or reduce services dramatically, and some programs have had to do massive layoffs for our housing attorneys. However, I want to highlight that since the inception of that grant, we have prevented over 10,000 evictions and helped over 110,000 households. With that, I will turn it over to Erica.

>> So we also want to share just a few examples of how the funds we administer actually operate within the community. Judges involved with the partnership grant project expressed that without the clinics funded by the grant, the success rates for restraining orders would be lower. They observed the clinic is especially helpful with obtaining the relevant details from litigants and helping litigants present those facts in a concise way so cases can proceed more effectively and efficiently. Another judge handling domestic violence cases described that self-represented litigants assisted by the grantees partnership grant project were better prepared in court and, quote, more confident in their own case, which also makes them feel more confident that our justice system is actually working for them, end quote. With regard to the Equal Access Fund, there was a grantee who was able to help a client with significant mental and physical impairments whose SSI benefits were cut. And that grantee submitted evidence of the ongoing disability, resulting in a positive outcome before the administrative law judge. For our consumer debt grants that we administered, a grantee was able to assist an elderly client who was facing multiple lawsuits arising from identity theft by helping that client obtain a credit report, identify fraudulent activity, and file an identity theft affidavit with the FTC. The grantee also helped the client respond to the lawsuits, resulting in dismissals. Our homelessness prevention grants funded an innovative walk-in clinic that allowed a grantee to more effectively serve veterans in the community to secure housing and avoid homelessness. And finally, the CARE Court grants helped a client who was suffering from severe mental health issues with a legal service provider representing the client through their mother's CARE Court petition move forward with the CARE Court process, and the client was connected with social services, medical treatment, and housing. Finally, I want to highlight a few ways that the commission and the Judicial Council have collaborated and can continue to collaborate. We have worked together to cosponsor convenings for legal service organizations, and we hope to continue to do so. We have gotten some good feedback on those convenings. We have worked together to provide technical assistance and trainings for legal service organizations to ensure that they are serving their clients effectively and efficiently. And we continue to cohost the Pathways to Justice conference. We have seen a lot of success in our partnership, and we hope that our collaborations can continue. And with that, we'll conclude our presentation. We are open to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you very much.

>> Thank you very much for your presentation and all the work that you do in this important area as well. Are there any questions or comments for our presenters?

>> Thank you again.

>> Thank you.

>> We next have a special preview of our celebration of Public Service Recognition Week. This year marks our second celebration of Public Service Recognition Week, which begins on May 4, as an opportunity to honor the 20,000 dedicated public servants of our judicial branch. As you know, these people are all the heart of the largest and, in my view, the finest court system in

our nation, from judges and clerks to court reporters and administrative staff. Each of you plays a vital role in ensuring our courts remain fair, impartial, and accessible to all. Through your work, you safeguard due process, uphold the rule of law, and help ensure that justice is not just an ideal but a reality for the communities that we serve every day. While your work on behalf of the public is appreciated throughout the entire year, this week does help us to especially highlight the contributions and bring them into the spotlight with even greater focus. We are excited to share a preview of the stories that we will be highlighting next month in celebration of Public Service Recognition Week, stories that reflect your commitment, professionalism, and impact. And today, I think we are going to be sharing videos of two of our court leaders: Justice, you saw him earlier, Justice Charles Smiley, who we had the privilege of hearing from earlier today during the presentation on the collaborative courts program, and also Laila Waheed, our court executive officer to the Superior Court for Nevada County. Okay. And next month, we will hear from more. So take it away. [Music]

>> My name is Charles Smiley. I am an associate justice of the California Court of Appeal. There are very difficult problems that come before the court. These issues are always very important to the litigants who are involved. So you want to bring your best self. But along the way, you are learning about different subject matter areas, you're learning about the experiences that other people go through. The idea of public service to me is rewarding because it gives me opportunities not only to get on the bench and make decisions but also to participate in the various policy decisions that also impact people's access to courts, people's experience once they arrive at the court. No matter what the law says, and whatever the decision we have to make might result in, we're rooting for you. We want you to do well. We want society to do well. And a lot of that has to do with the function, the core function of the courts to make these difficult decisions and follow the rule of law. When people think of the courts, they're largely thinking about the judge or justice who's presiding over the case. The truth is that the work that we do and our ability to execute the important mission of the court is the result of many, many dedicated professional people. From the clerks at the window where people might go to get paperwork or ask a question, to the folks who are instrumental inside the courtrooms, our interpreters, our court reporters, there are attorneys who work with judges behind the scenes to help make sure timely decisions can be obtained. There is a small army of people who are very concerned about you, your case, and the idea of justice and what it looks like in California. Other than jury service, you might never have to step into a courthouse. But I can assure you the work that's being done inside our courthouses every day is critically important to the health of our society.

>> My name is Laila Waheed, and I'm court executive officer for Nevada County Superior Court. I started my career in public service as an AmeriCorps Fellow working in family resource centers in the Sacramento region and then applied to be a judicial fellow through the Capital Fellows Program. I found wonderful mentors who were dedicated and caring and really offered me an opportunity to explore the structure that we work in as an institution, you know, the rules, the statutes, the Constitution that we support, and the spaces for creativity and problem solving. One of the things that has kept me engaged with the judicial branch and really

valuing the principles it stands for is the neutrality of the court. Especially when we live in such polarized times, being able to be part of an institution that stands for neutrality, that stands for fairness, is really something that I value and appreciate. Every day, I run into a lot of different challenges, sometimes challenge after challenge, trying to support my team in doing the work to serve our community. And then there are these moments where I walk by the front counter and I see one of my staff listening compassionately to a member of the public as they tell their life story and just need to process a little bit, or I hear about something that's happened in court and a resolution that's occurred after months and months of litigation that's going to allow the parties to move on with their lives. This is about people's lives, and when they come to the court, they're looking for a resolution, but their experience of the court happens with every interaction with court staff, and how that feels to someone is something that we can do our best to make better. I choose to serve because our judicial branch and court system is a foundational pillar of our democracy. People come to the courts when they've exhausted all of the other options for resolving a conflict, and the courts are there to be accessible, to be fair, to be neutral places for people to get through their biggest challenges. I serve because I see dedicated, caring people every single day in this branch doing their very best to make the court system continue to function for people and to adapt and change and function in ways that we've not yet considered. And serving alongside those people is something that continues to inspire me and keep me going. [Music]

>> Well, I wish they were here so we could applaud for them. It was really a powerful message that they shared, and I encourage you to tune in for, there will be three others that will be shared with you for Latrice Brown, A. J. Guzman, and Sheri Gulino. Thank you to them. Thank you to all of you and everyone throughout our entire court family for your public service and dedication and your integrity, and the work that you do on behalf of the public is something that we don't get to thank you for often enough, but it's very much appreciated. So thank you. As a final item for the Judicial Council meeting, I wanted to remind you that chairs of the council's various committees have included in your written materials reports that are posted on our California Courts public website. That does conclude the April Judicial Council meeting. Our next regularly scheduled meeting will be July 17 and 18, and thank you so much. This meeting is adjourned.