

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 [www.courts.ca.gov](http://www.courts.ca.gov).

>> Good morning. Welcome to the public business meeting of the Judicial Council of California for Friday, November 15, 2024. The meeting is now in session. During premeeting technical checks for the live webcast, we confirmed a quorum of Judicial Council numbers for the meeting. Based on our agenda, we plan to adjourn at about 11:35 today. We will be concluding our meeting today with a special presentation of the Judicial Council's highest honor, the 2024 Distinguished Services Awards. I want to welcome our three honorees, Justice William Bedsworth, Judge Terry Friedman, and Ms. Melissa Fowler Bradley, and their special guests that are joining us today. I encourage you to remain with us for the presentation to learn about the contributions of these exceptional public servants. And now we are going to move on to public comment. I will turn it over to Justice Hill.

>> Thank you, Chief. We will now begin the public comments section of the meeting, during which members of the public are provided with an opportunity to speak on general matters of judicial administration or specific agenda items. Today's meeting, including public comment, is live-streamed, and the recording will be available to the public online. Although our meeting today is being held in person, members of the public were given an opportunity to speak either remotely or in person at the Judicial Council office here in San Francisco. Please be reminded that Judicial Council is not an adjudicatory body. The council is not authorized to intervene on behalf of a party in a case, and 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 for personnel and parties. At this time, I will begin by calling the speakers who are attending here in person. We will then proceed to call remote public comment after we have the first two speakers. All speakers will have up to three minutes to present their comments. I would ask that you present your name first, indicate your name, if applicable, your title and affiliation. On the podium are lights that will inform you of the time you have remaining. A yellow light will come on when you have one minute remaining, a red light will come on when your time is expired. The first named individual who will be with us today is Kai Han. Please step forward. It is nice to have you with us.

>> [ Inaudible ] – I have tried to contact California DOJ and Sacramento grand jury again about my complaint. However, there was no response and contact for them. It is not fair for a complainant. Superior courts should have a process to allow complainant to request a hearing with grand jury committee to review the complaint intake process to prevent any unfair practice. Grand juries should have a lot to disclose that deny the complaint to the public if the complainant chooses to do so. [ Inaudible ] It can prevent a valid complaint submitted to grand jury from be hidden inside the courthouse. It also increases the transparency of the grand jury intake process to prevent political power using fake information to cover up criminal activity of law enforcement or prevent political power using law enforcement to cover up criminal activity. I appealed Judicial Council to look into Sacramento area to see if political power is using fake information for obstruction of justice and interfering law enforcement and justice system. It is an obstruction of justice for broken grand jury to investigate law enforcement presenting document for a fatal case. It undermines the California justice system. After the last meeting, I emailed the forgery police report and the handwritten note of DA office to Judicial Council to support my accusation. All Judicial Council members are voluntary to join the council. The purpose is to maintain a healthy and fair justice system. Please provide help to address the issue to Governor Mr. Newsome and address the issue to the public. Thank you.

>> Thank you very much. Our next in-person speaker today is Sherez Eshwarren. If you will step forward, please? Good morning.

>> Good morning. I hope time is treating you all well. I have presented four matters to Chief Justice Guerrero and the council, one of which is a continuation of the last time I was here, and one of which involves a member of this council. What are your decisions?

>> At this time, I would ask you to continue speaking. We are not going to be, necessarily at this point, responding. But we are here to listen.

>> Yeah, I understand that public comment is a tool that you can hide behind. You don't have to make decisions. But at this point, you guys have to.

>> Again, we appreciate you being here. We're listening—

>> The authority and credibility of this council, and supported by the 28th Chief Justice, you guys have to do something. I have had my life in danger. I seek justice and truth. To hide is disrespectful to truth, this Constitution, and the public. To your own selves. You don't gain anything. You gain nothing. And you just lose credibility. No one is going to respect your leadership. You don't have a backbone, no one is going to respect your leadership.

>> If you have concluded your remarks, please let us know. Otherwise, you are certainly free -- you have a minute left.

>> Silence is good.

>> It appears you have concluded your remarks. We thank you very, very much.

>> I have another minute. Silence is saying something. [ Silence ] Chief Justice Guerrero, you are sacrificing your integrity in front of everybody. [ Silence ] And you are submitting to the authority of time and that I am the highest authority in this room.

>> We will now turn to speakers who are appearing remotely . When your name is called, please turn on your camera, unmute your microphone, and begin by stating your name and, if applicable, your title and affiliation. The 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. We have the first two speakers who, I think, are appearing together, Lilly Maggiolo and Christy Bodily of Ascending Families LLC in Northern California's Breakthrough Parenting. I see them on the screen, and I believe one of you is taking the lead, perhaps.

>> Yes, that's correct. Good morning. Thank you for having us today. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I want to share an experience that has profoundly affected us and raises important questions about inclusivity within your organization. Over a year ago, we registered for a networking learning session and received confirmation to attend. We were very excited to attend and looked forward to learning and networking with other providers in the state of California. We joined the remote meeting on time, and despite the host knowing we were in the waiting room, we were denied entry or admittance. This was particularly shocking as we have participated in sessions and training for over 15 years combined. Not only that, we—our credentials are vast, and we have extensive experience in providing supervised visitation within the state of California. We are very well respected within our industry and serve as mentors to other less seasoned providers. Not only that, we—I particularly have joined forces with the JC in the past during COVID to create certain evaluation tools and learning exercises to better support providers during the COVID crisis. I had a very good relationship up until this point with the JC as well as providers within the state of California. That all changed this afternoon—that particular day—and let me continue. Like I said, this was particularly shocking as we have participated in sessions and training for over 15 years combined. On that day, I felt discriminated—we felt discriminated against and purposefully excluded. The JC prides itself on being inclusive, yet as a female minority business owner—as female minority business owners, we experienced the opposite. What changed, I ask? We ask. It seems our status as board members played a significant role. After the JC severed its relationship—its professional relationship—with an industry-related board that we joined last year and took on executive roles, our professional growth and learning opportunities vanished without explanation. We don't know what conflicts exist, nor do we need to know. What matters is that we believe reparations are warranted. We are here today to seek your support in enforcing our request for a written apology, and per the email from the JC, we would like to know what appropriate actions were taken to rectify the behavior that remains

unexplained. A specific explanation for the discrimination we faced is also requested. This acknowledgment and information would help us feel whole again and restore our trust in your organization's commitment to inclusivity. Thank you for your time and attention. We look forward to your support in addressing this matter. At this time, I will go ahead and defer to Kristi in case she has any added comments.

>> Hi, I'm Christy Bodily with Northern California Breakthrough Parenting. I do have additional comments that are relative to a training I was finally permitted to attend on Monday, the fourth of November, the day before elections. At that training I felt the same person who prevented us from the previous training—when I was allowed to go to this training—felt it was a hostile environment. Myself and other people were treated and spoken with in a way that did not demonstrate respect. Particularly surrounding several people who requested if we were going to be able to get off early the following day for some of us who came from out-of-town areas so we could return to our areas to do in-person voting for the presidential election. We were chastised and told we should have had that prepared before we came, and even after questioning to ask if we could maybe shorten our lunch break if we all agreed to it so we could leave half an hour early to be able to travel to get to those polls, we were told no. And again, that we should have prepared for that in advance knowing that the training would be on an election day, which was very disheartening because the trainer herself that day said we were going to wrap up early because she had a personal commitment that she needed to get to so she was going to let us out early, which was very concerning that if her personal commitment can shorten the training on that day, why wouldn't those of us who need to go to in-person voting be told we should have done it essentially a different way and she wasn't going to let anybody out early? That's not a good representation of fairness. We were reminded that we are not state employees, and she would have to speak to her manager or her boss, one of whom was sitting right behind me and spoke nothing to that.

>> I would just remind you your time has—is now expired. So, if you could wrap up, that would be appreciated.

>> Thank you. So, like Lilly, I share the exact same experience and concerns. And we do request a written apology and further explanation as to what actions were taken.

>> Thank you both very much. We appreciate you being with us. The next remote comment is from Deirdre Cyprian. And we will have her on the line momentarily.

>> Good morning.

>> Good morning.

>> My name is Deidre Cyprian, D-E-I-D-R-E C-Y-P-R-I-A-N. Again, good morning, Justice Hill, chair, and members of the Council. I want to thank you for this opportunity to share some issues I have encountered navigating the court system. I have been attempting to collect a

family law judgment since January 2024. I have discovered that family law processes are not aligned with sheriff office civil division with respect to the collection of judgments and claim --

>> You are cutting out a little bit. In fact, we can't hear you at the moment. It looks like you are muted on your end, if you would not mind checking that. We still can't hear you.

>> Can you hear me now?

>> We can. That did the trick.

>> Okay. So, I have been trying to collect a family law judgment since January 2024. I have discovered that the family law processes are not aligned with the sheriff's office civil division with respect to the collection of judgments and claim of exemptions filed by the other party. The family law court does not accept documents referenced by the sheriff's office needed to oppose claims of exemption. Due to this, money collected from a bank levy was returned to the other party, although I followed online direction from the court's website. Second, I would like to advocate for improved information to be made available online regarding family law debtor exams. I was not informed until the day of court by the judge that securing a court reporter is advised. Had I known this, it would have prevented me from being placed in a room with the other party, who was uncooperative and hostile. The presence of another party would have made a huge difference. Lastly, I would like there to be an audit for the family law Sacramento family relations court processes. I filed an order on June 12, and after not receiving any information, I followed up in person on July 16. I was told the document was lost but was given a hearing date. I was asked if I wanted to wait while court staff located the document. I also sent a certified letter to court admin that was delivered on October 4. On October 18, I followed up in person, and I was told by the admin person that it was never received and there was nothing on file.

>> I would just ask that you, you don't mind, please wrap up your remarks. It looks like you are at your time.

>> Okay. I'm closing now. I then emailed the letter to admin address. On October 28 I received a letter stating the letter was forwarded to another court official for response . As of today, I have not received a response. My concern is this letter shared issues that occurred at my September court hearing and expressed concerns for my safety at a November 6 hearing. Having worked for public service for over 30 years, I understand the challenges the courts face. However, it's unacceptable that the court lost documents related to a hearing, that a letter was not promptly delivered to the appropriate party even though it was easily identified where it needed to be delivered to, and that I have yet to receive a response to a letter a month and a half later.

>> We thank you.

>> I thank you for your time, and I hope the court—I hope these issues are looked into.

>> We thank you very much. We thank you for taking the time to be with us today, and for those online you can certainly continue watching the proceedings on the court's website. Chief, that concludes public comment for today.

>> Thank you, Justice Hill, thank you to everyone for your comments, your silence, and the time you took to be with us 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 prior business meeting on September 20. We continued our spotlight on civic learning throughout September and into this month. This year marked the third consecutive year that our Power of Democracy civic Learning Initiative extended Constitution Day into a month-long celebration in California. As part of that commemoration, I was joined by our Civic Learning Award cosponsor, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond and Orange County Superior Court Presiding Judge Maria Hernandez to present our top civics honor, the Civic Learning Award of Excellence to John F. Kennedy High School in La Palma. During the ceremony, students highlighted their work on Project REACH, which stands for Redistributing Essential Goods and Advocating for Community Homeless. And we heard an award-winning student speech on political polarization. Impressively, Anaheim Union High School District has now had all 17 of its schools recognized with a Civic Learning Award. And we have previously honored their superintendent, Mr. Mike Matsuda, as the champion of civics. I also visited Madera Elementary School in Ventura County, and Natomas Pacific Pathways Preparatory Middle School and their High School, NP3 for short, in Sacramento County, to award both of those schools with a Civic Learning Award of Excellence. Judges from the Ventura County Superior Court helped me present the award to Madera, where I administered the oath of office to the incoming student council and visited a fifth-grade classroom to learn about their civics projects and answer their questions about being a judge and my role as Chief Justice. At NP3, I visited middle and high school classrooms, where students presented their civics projects, including a very impressive reenactment of constitutional convention and timely student discussions on election issues. They were discussing the ballots. Senator Umberg, you would have been proud. We then joined an assembly of students, teachers, and administrators. We were fortunate to have State Senator Angelique Ashby, Presiding Judge Bunmi Awoniyi, Administrative Presiding Justice Laurie Earl, and former U.S. District Court Judge Morrison England all joining us for the presentation of the award. I continue to be inspired by students at our Civic Award-winning schools and by the educators and administrators who are creating opportunities for students to understand and practice civics. Our California Supreme Court also hosted its annual outreach session at the Fifth District Court of Appeal in Fresno with Justice Hill and his colleagues, who are all incredibly supportive, and we thank them. The session was attended by students from 12 area schools from elementary level through law school. The Elementary students needed assistance reaching the podium, which was really cool. Among them were four schools that have previously won Civic Learning Awards, including Maple Creek Elementary, which earned our Award of Excellence last year. We started the session by fielding questions from the students about the court and our role in the judicial system. The

students also stayed in the courtroom to watch oral argument for the cases on our calendar that day. I also attended events for two other groups that share our goal of advancing civics education. I participated in a fireside chat moderated by our own Judge Julia Alloggiamento at an event by the Silicon Valley Urban Debate League, where I accepted their Speaker of the Year Award. The organization provides the youth in underrepresented areas with opportunities to participate in civic learning and engagement through speech and debate. Back among our judicial officers, I welcomed four groups of judges and commissioners participating in our New Judge Orientation program to my chambers in San Francisco. The group included 19 judges and nine commissioners representing 28 different trial courts from throughout the state. I was also pleased to participate in programs for two local affinity groups dedicated to protecting equality and diversity on the bench and in the bar for all underrepresented minorities. I was honored to accept the Lifetime Achievement Award and give remarks to the Unity Bar of Yolo County during their awards gala. And I participated in a speaker series held by the San Mateo County Bar Association's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission that included a panel discussion with Judge Sharon Cho and Judge Renee Reyna. At the appellate court level, I gave closing remarks to our Appellate Management Institute, which provides an opportunity for our appellate court managers and supervisors to refine their skills and share innovative practices. Importantly, this year's focus was on recruiting and developing the next generation of public service leaders in our state judicial branch. At the national level, I participated in the national meeting of state Access to Justice Commission chairs, where I spoke about California initiatives to expand access to justice. That meeting included Chief Justices and Supreme Court justices from throughout the country, along with the bar, civil legal aid providers, and other stakeholders who come together to discuss ways to remove barriers to civil justice for low-income and disadvantaged people. I also joined the National Association of Women Judges for their annual conference in San Diego, where I provided some keynote remarks and was honored to accept the Justice Vaino Spencer Leadership Award. I was also pleased to attend the California Women Lawyers conference for their special 50th anniversary celebration and to administrate the oath of office for the 2025 board of governors. Last week, I and many of my colleagues on the Supreme Court participated in the Supreme Court of California Conference with Mr. David Carrillo of Berkeley Law, where I participated in a Q&A regarding my responsibilities as Chief Justice and emerging issues facing the branch. Another event of particular importance to me and our California Supreme Court was the naming ceremony for the Court of Appeal in Santa Ana after former Supreme Court Justice Cruz Reynoso. It was a special opportunity to be able to recognize his life and legacy, including his contributions to and his voice on our high court writing opinions that helped protect and expand civil rights in California and advance individual liberties. It was also an honor to spend time with members of Justice Reynoso's family who were present at the naming ceremony providing personal insights regarding his life and character and how much the naming of the building means to the Santa Ana community and beyond. And Senator Umberg was also present. Thank you. That concludes my report. Now we will hear from Administrative Director Shelley Curran with her report to you.

>> Good morning, Chief. Thank you very much. I would like to start out by echoing the Chief's congratulations to this year's Distinguished Service Award honorees, Justice Bedsworth, Judge

Friedman, and Court Executive Officer Fowler-Bradley. Our branch in government and the people of California thank you for your incredible public service contributions over the years. We are very grateful to each one of you for leading by example and encouraging all of us and inspiring all of us to do our best work. Turning to my regular Administrative Director's written report, which is in your meeting materials, this report represents a roundup of the activities of the Judicial Council staff organization undertaken since our last meeting in September. The report includes a recap of the actions taken by 20 council advisory committees, and first, I would like to turn your attention to a couple things in particular. First item I want to mention is at the beginning of November the Judicial Council, State Bar, and Legal Aid Association of California cosponsored a statewide Pathways to Justice conference. Approximately 350 attendees, including nonprofit legal service providers, private bar pro bono volunteers, and staff from courts and self-help centers came together with a focus on how the legal community can improve services to people who have challenges accessing the court system. The conference highlighted a broad range of strategies related to expanding access to the legal community that included things like technology, artificial intelligence, lawyer referral services, and language access. It also offered trainings for courts and legal service providers in the areas such as housing, family law, and domestic violence, which parties often are without attorneys. The strong turnout from this first Pathways to Justice conference since the pandemic demonstrated an increasing multidisciplinary interest in closing the justice gap showcased various opportunities for innovations and new partnerships among various service providers. Thank you to our entire team who was involved in putting this conference together. At the end of September, the judicial branch recognized Native American Day in honor of California's first people in their history. The state judicial branch first marked this holiday in 2022 after legislation was passed that was sponsored by the Judicial Council. Over the course of the past two months, the Council's work has focused on several activities supporting equal access to justice for California's first people. Council staff participated in a virtual Native American and Indigenous Work Force Career Day promoting job opportunities in the judicial branch. Training was provided on the Indian Child Welfare Act at the County Council's Association of Child Welfare conference, and another training on the legal rights of Native American children in juvenile justice was conducted for the juvenile probation department in Riverside County. The council's Tribal Court-State Court Forum, which is cochaired by the Honorable Abby Abinanti, Chief Judge of the Yurok Tribe Court and Judge Joyce Hinrichs of the Superior Court of Humboldt County also convened virtually during these months. Like many of our advisory committees have been doing over the course of the last several months, the members who began their service were welcomed into that committee. A major focus for the forum continues to be removing barriers to justice for tribal participation and state court proceedings and supporting tribal courts by improving recognition and enforcement of tribal court orders within the court system. And although not mentioned in my written report, as we honored our military veterans earlier this week, I want to note some of the ways in which the judicial branch serves military veterans and their families. Through the collaborative court process, California has established 46 veterans treatment courts. In these courts, veterans can take part in programs tailored to address their specific needs. Participants meet frequently with judicial officers, court staff, service providers, mentors, and various support teams. The council's Collaborative Justice



Advisory Committee has a subcommittee on veterans and military families chaired by Justice Eileen Moore, who herself is a veteran who served as a contact nurse in Vietnam. In collaboration with justice partners, the subcommittee supports education and training for judicial officers and court staff in order to improve our efforts to serve veterans and their families. I was happy to learn that a member of the council, Judge Crompton, also serves on the advisory body of Swords to Plowshares, the nonprofit that helps veterans obtain housing and other benefits, so thank you, Judge Crompton, for that work. And finally, I want to acknowledge Judicial Council member Senator Tom Umberg, who is a U.S. Army veteran. Among his other accomplishments, Senator Umberg served in South Korea with NATO forces in Italy. And Senator Umberg remained in the U.S. Army Reserves, rising to the rank of colonel. So, to Senator Umberg and all our military veterans and their families in the branch, we are very grateful for your service. Shifting back to specific items addressed in my written report on the Information's Technology side of the house, October was Cybersecurity Awareness Month, and our IT staff and the courts collaborated on activities related to critical safety and security issues for the courts and court users. Advances in technology and science with tools and processes also informed a number of education and training programs for judicial officers and court staff since our last meeting in September. In the "Digital Justice" podcast series, judges and subject-matter experts discussed judicial implications of the latest developments in science and technology. In an October podcast, they focused on the increasingly common phenomenon of self-driving cars. They look at the technology behind them, safety, and potential legal issues. And at the virtual judicial officer data analytics summit, commissioners, judges, and justices from 25 counties and appellate districts came together to look at dynamic data dashboards. They learned strategies for data-driven decisionmaking and gained insights into effective collaboration using data analytics. So, lastly, with the December 1, 2024, deadline fast approaching and following the implementation of the eight cohort-one trial courts, the remaining 50 courts are set to come online to implement the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment Act, otherwise known as CARE. During this reporting period, Judicial Council staff met with 19 different courts. They held two convenings, one in San Francisco and one in San Jose, to strengthen the rollout of CARE. As you know, the act –specified adults to petition the court to create a voluntary CARE agreement or a court-ordered CARE plan that can include treatment, housing support, and other services for individuals with untreated schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders. In the first 12 months of the program, from October 2023 to September of 2024, early implementing courts received 787 positions. The courts and council have collaborated closely with state and county partners to ensure the successful implementation of the act. And to conclude my report, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge two members of the council staff who are with us today for their last Judicial Council meetings. After 19 years of service with the Legal Services office, Criminal Justice Services office, and a stint with the Second Appellate Court District until we were able to get them back, Legal Services Managing Attorney Michael Giden is retiring from public service. During his tenure, Michael has worked closely with leadership of internal committees, advisory committees, working groups, and just about every single staff person at the Judicial Council. He has been an authority in governance and procedure on legislative issues, and he has been influential on a number of very significant efforts we have undertaken that include court

security, court construction, trial court funding, Prop. 66. As the judicial branch moved quickly to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, Michael was central and integral to our work with the internal chairs in order to adopt emergency rules to keep the courts running in California. He's used his wealth of knowledge to assist and mentor legal services attorneys as well as other Judicial Council staff in the development and implementation of new rules and forms as they pass through the Rules Committee and on to the council. Michael was part of the Criminal Justice Services team during the time that I headed up that office. And my respect for Michael both as an attorney and as a person has only grown over the years. At his retirement party early this week, we presented Michael with a certificate of service signed by the Chief, recognizing his contributions to the judicial branch. Michael, we will miss you and wish you very well in your retirement. [ Applause ] And, finally, we have another farewell to mark. And I'm really hoping this is it. We will be done with retirements after this. Although she is going to be with us until the end of January, today is the last council meeting for the Judicial Council's director of Facilities Services, Pella McCormick. Pella is retiring early in the new year after 30 years of public service with California. Since joining the council in 2017 and serving as the head of Facilities, she has provided a tremendous leadership for complex court constructions and facility projects throughout California. And when I say "throughout California" I mean it, because I see Pella in more far-flung places throughout the state than I do anyplace else. Pella was instrumental in facilitating access to justice in courthouses around the state with accomplishments that include leading her team and establishing comprehensive plans and standards for the design and construction of new courthouses, advancing environmental sustainability, ensuring ongoing accessibility and security of court buildings through the statewide maintenance program, and, like Michael, helping the judicial branch through the times of unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, when access to the courthouses and protective measures for employees and the public were among the highest priority. As many began to panic, Pella's incredible skills laid on top of her very calm demeanor helped the JCC staff organization and courts pivot quickly to get open for the public. Pella, thank you for your outstanding dedication and service to the public. I invite you to come forward now so we can present you with a resolution that was signed by the Chief Justice recognizing your public service contributions to this body, to the courts, and to the people of California. [ Applause ]

>> Thank you, everybody. It has been a pleasure. [ Applause ]

>> Thank you, Shelley. I just wanted to echo and thank Pella and Michael for your dedicated service to the Judicial Council, the judicial branch, and the public in California. You have set such a high bar for your successors. I don't want to say replacements because you can't be replaced. And we will miss you and thank you for your service. Next, we have our consent agenda with 12 items. The council's Executive and Planning Committee as you know sets items on the consent and discussion agendas to optimize the best use of the council's 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 a particular item is on the consent agenda is not a reflection of its significance, and any council member can request to move an item from the consent to the discussion agenda if they believe it would benefit from further

discussion and deliberation. As always, we appreciate the many hours of work that are put in by our advisory committees and their staff that have enabled these recommendations and reports to come before us for consideration. Do members of the council have questions or comments before I entertain a motion?

>> Chief, if I might draw a couple of items to the council's attention. The first is report 24-178, the Sargent Shriver Act Midcycle Allocation. Just such a wonderful program, especially in the budget times that we're in now. Since 2011, the Sargent Shriver civil programs awarded grants to pilot projects that establish partnerships between legal aid organizations and superior courts are the purpose of providing legal representation to low-income litigants in civil matters. The program now has 14 projects. Over the years, the Legislature increased revenue to the program that has outpaced expenditures. This has led to the program having a reserve of about \$23 million—such good news. Recognizing the unmet need for legal aid services, the committee approved a one-time distribution in April of up to \$5 million from their reserves to existing projects on a pro rata basis, and then existing projects were asked to submit proposals and revised budgets to describe how they would use the pro rata distributions. Eleven of those 14 projects submitted proposals. The pro rata methodology approach to distribution of the funds was approved by the TCBAC Funding Methodology Subcommittee, the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee, and the Judicial Branch [Budget] Committee. So, it's such good news in today's times that the Legislature has funding for the program. The second report is 24-175, again, good news in these budget times. Access to Justice Commission distribution of \$250,000 for the administration of the LRAP programs. So, as we all know, there are many attorneys who could not or would not choose a career in legal services due to student loan debt. And this program helps with that. The Access to Justice Commission is an independent nonprofit agency, and beginning in fiscal year 2023–24, SB 133 directed the council to annually distribute \$250,000 to the Equal Access Fund's for the administration of a tax-advantaged student loan repayment form. The Legislature directed the council to provide the Access to Justice Commission with \$5 million in Equal Access funding for legal service grants since fiscal year 2021–22. In fiscal year 2023–24, with \$250,000 provided through the council for administrative costs, the Access to Justice Commission obtained its California Student Loan Servicing license, established a process for calculating and distributing student loan reimbursements, and is on track to make over 1,000 distributions to reimburse legal aid staff members for their student loan payments for the current fiscal year. Just excellent. I know they are on the consent agenda, but I hope all council members had a chance to see those reports.

>> Thank you for your comments on those important programs. I did have to do a double take. There's reserves on something. Are there any comments, anyone else? Okay. Thank you. Now having had an opportunity to review the consent agenda items, I will entertain a motion to move approval of the consent agenda.

>> Yamasaki moves.

>> Thank you.

>> Moorman seconds.

>> Thank you. All of those in favor say aye. Any noes? Any abstentions? The consent agenda is approved. Thank you. We now have seven discussion agenda items today. Our first item is a presentation of our resolution on Court Adoption and Permanency Month. We welcome our presenters here today. We have Justice Tari Cody, cochair of the Family and Juv[enile] Law Advisory Committee. And we also welcome Ms. Cache Raine-Jones, a lived-experience representative.

>> Good morning.

>> Good morning.

>> Thank you for inviting us here this morning. As indicated, I am Tari Cody. I am on the Second District Court of Appeal. But I think more importantly for today, before I was elevated to that position, I was a dependency judge for 14 years in Ventura County. So, I know something of what we are talking about this morning. At the request of the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, on November first of this year, the Chief Justice signed the 2024 Court Adoption and Permanency resolution. It is already signed, already framed, right here. We don't need to get it signed. This is the 25th year the Judicial Council has recognized November as Adoption and Permanency Month. I think that's quite a milestone. Juvenile court judges are uniquely responsible for the care, supervision, custody, and support of children under the court's jurisdiction and provide active leadership within the community to ensure resources are available to serve families and children. Note that the month is called "adoption and permanency" because there are different ways to achieve permanency other than adoption. Different ways to achieve permanency include reunification with families, placement with a relative, a guardianship, and adoption. And I might add just living with a devoted resource family, formerly known as foster families, is also a form of permanency. The theme for this year's national Adoption and Permanency Month is, "Honoring youth; strengthening pathways for lasting bonds." This year, the Judicial Council is recognizing older youth achieving permanency. The Judicial Council was a cosponsor on extended foster care legislation in 2012. And it extended dependency court jurisdiction for, we call them children, but they were adults when they hit 18 to 21. In the first 10 years of extended foster care, we have seen 50 percent of youth who were in care at some point at ages 16 and 17 and who turned 18 in 2017 enrolled in postsecondary education by age 23, and 77 percent were employed. I think that reflects the success of extended foster care. I also would like to add a personal note. When I first began serving in a dependency assignment, we did not have extended foster care. So I recall cases when children on their 18th birthday we had to dismiss. And it was not a happy day. It was just mandatory. And when I came back to dependency after a brief hiatus, extended foster care was in place. And I can't tell you the sea change that that made for adults—they are not children when they hit 18—adults who remained in our system. It was—it really focused, I think, the support of social workers, attorneys, and others on planning for the future for these young

adults, more so than if we had to dismiss the case when they are 18. So, I appreciate greatly the Judicial Council's support of that legislation in 2012. We know all children are resilient and only need access to one caring and committed adult to reduce trauma in foster care and other trauma that they suffer. Ninety-five percent of foster youth ages 20 to 21 in 2023 reported having access to a caring and committed adult or guidance and emotional support from such a person. Now, the really important reason why we are here today: I am joined by Cache Raine-Jones, who will share her foster care journey. She is an incredibly impressive young lady who served as one of 10 judicial fellows with the California courts in a nationally recognized judicial administration graduate program this past year. She is now working with a philanthropic organization to assist nonprofits with diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. And she certainly exemplifies the importance of seeking adoption for youth and teens, and how a permanent placement for older youth can lead to quite amazing things.

>> Thank you, Justice Cody. Hello, my name is Cache. Hello to a lot of familiar faces. I'm here before you as a neighbor, a friend, a mother to my beautiful daughter who is here with me, and importantly, I guess, in this space, as somebody with lived experience in the foster to adoption pipelines. My foster care journey began when, actually, I was six in the state of Kansas. Up until that point I was in and out of kinship care until finally at 6 it was determined that myself and four other siblings, so a total of five children, would go into foster care. Early memories, I remember my belongings being in a plastic garbage bag, being handed off to somebody, and I would go on to spend my seventh birthday with a complete stranger. And my foster care journey was marked by a lot of fear, shock, loneliness, abandonment. I would go on to attend, I want to say, four different elementary schools, two or three middle schools, a total of two high schools. During this time, I was separated from my siblings. There would be moments and times when I would have visitations. At times, I would also be placed in the same home with at least one to two other siblings. Then there came a time when I turned 10 and we had an opportunity to be adopted. We were going to be adopted by a single woman who had already adopted nine children, making myself and two other siblings 12. So, I would enter into a home of 12. I had no decisionmaking power. That was going to be my forever home. And we would go on to do visitations with this family, and I believed that was going to be my story. Then this turned into what we would call a "disrupted adoption." It ended up being that this was not going to be my forever home. I was approached by a social worker at the time who had asked me a question which I had never been asked before, especially during all my placements. She asked, do you want to be here? Do you want to stay with his family? And I could not say no quick enough. And I think this was one of the biggest turning moments in my life. Unfortunately, I would go back into the foster care system because of that decision deciding not to be adopted by this family. And I would be split up from my siblings once again. And again, instability. I experienced maybe my tougher moments in foster care during this time. And then, a woman, a single woman retired from social working, had seen the newspaper ad, and said, I want to adopt these children. She did try to adopt as many children as she could, but at the time she was only able to adopt myself and an older sibling, and my baby brother was adopted by another family. Oddly enough, all of our adopted last names turned into Jones. So, I became Cache Raine-Jones, and so did a younger brother. He became a Jones as well. And that was the

end of my journey in Kansas. So, I will make my way into California. But my adoption as a teenager, I was 12 going on 13 at the time. And having the ability to say yes to this woman who had taken my sibling and I in, it was a great experience. We moved to Washington state where I was able to be a kid for the first time. I did not have to worry about moving homes. I stayed in, finally, one high school. My ninth-grade year is when I had been adopted, and I was able to focus on my studies. School was really important to me, and I was allowed to be a kid. I had a best friend for the first time. I had friends who I was going to see next year. It was such a beautiful time post my adoption. And I was able to focus on my education. I obtained a full-ride scholarship to the ROTC and started my journey off at UC Berkeley, where that brought me to California, and I came to California. I focused on political science. It was always kind of prelaw for me. I think early on I knew I wanted to kind of be the representation that I had at moments in my life. And life got the best of me when I was in college. I still needed my adopted mom. I think that was the important thing. I was still able to call her and speak with her. I became a mom right before my 22nd birthday, and my higher education journey was once again a struggle and a challenge. But I remember being able to call my adopted mom during that time. I think, as children, we needed parents. As a teenager I needed a parent. But also as an adult, and even now, still needing and still wanting to call. I'm so grateful that I had her during my young adult years in college. I would have my daughter and went into the workforce. Finally, I had an opportunity to graduate. I just graduated last year, finished my final year. It took nine years to finish my last year of school. But it's a story that I claim and that I'm not ashamed of and I am really happy to be here because that led me to an opportunity to become a judicial fellow in the Capital Fellows Program, where I met many of you. Some—I have had conversations and opportunities that I don't think I would have ever had if not for the stability and guidance especially in my high school years. And as a judicial fellow I was placed as the Los Angeles Superior Court—Los Angeles County Superior Court. And I had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that led to more opportunities. And I am here today now. I think there were moments in my story I was ashamed of, but I was grateful to be connected to people to empower me to be able to share that story because it is my story. When we talk about permanency, I think about—there are ways to have permanency. I think about, also, I was adopted into a single-family, a single woman adopted me. What does it mean to have permanency within a family? I also think about my sibling separations and also the moments and times when I encountered a judge for a first time or encountered social workers or teachers or people who showed up in my life as support systems. And so, I'm just grateful to be here to share my story and share this speech with you all, just grateful that I had an opportunity, so thank you. [ Applause ]

>> Well, I can't top that. In conclusion, though, I would like to thank again the Judicial Council and the state court branch for recognizing November is the Adoption and Permanency Month every year. I hope it will continue. You can see how important it is to focus on that for our children. And I just want to make one final comment. It's not just supporting them. I mean, obviously, she has gained a lot from the support that she received, but think of how much better we all are having somebody like this do so well. I think it benefits all of us to recognize the importance of permanency for these children. So, thank you very much.

>> Thank you, Justice Cody, and thank you Miss Raine-Jones for your incredible story and having the courage to share that with us. It is so empowering, inspiring, and you should be proud. We're proud of you. Thank you. Are there any comments or questions?

>> Okay. Thank you again. For our second item we have recommendations on new and revised adoption forms. We are being joined by Justice Cody again. Thank you. Then we have Miss Abby Frost Lucha from the Family Law Facilitator's Office for the Superior Court in Marin County, and Miss Kerry Doyle, Judicial Council Center for Families, Children & the Courts.

>> So, I am back. Good morning, again. On behalf of the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, I am joined as stated by Abby Frost Lucha, who is the family law facilitator and manager of the self-help center in Marin County. And we are here to present on the Judicial Council's new forms—well, I hope they are going to be new forms—for adoption cases. Miss Kerry Doyle is here to answer any of your questions. She authored the proposal. The last presentation focused on the importance of adoption and permanency for children under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court in which I sat previously, but families are also formed through Family Court adoptions. And those are agency adoptions, independent adoptions, stepparent adoptions, and intercountry adoptions. And in my prior life I sat as the judge that handled all adoptions in the county that I sat in, Ventura. The advisory committee has prioritized developing a separate form for stepparent adoptions because these adoptions have different requirements, excuse me, and the current single form for all adoption types can be confusing for judges, attorneys, court staff—for everybody. The committee also updated an information sheet to provide guidance on understanding and using the different adoption forms and other documents that need to be submitted in an adoption case.

>> Our self-help centers provide litigants a means to get free help navigating the adoption process and the court process. While we don't provide advice, we do provide information and help answer questions to ensure that a litigant fills out their paperwork correctly and can file a case. All self-help users do not have attorneys and are self-represented. We provide services in core languages. Without our services, many litigants may have no other way to access the relief they are seeking. One such example of this is a father who visited our office a few months ago. He had been raising his stepdaughter from a very early age and wanted to make it official. While the paperwork was daunting enough, completing it in English became another obstacle for him to overcome. Our office was able to assist him in Spanish, explain the process to him, and help him properly complete his paperwork, ensuring the adoption was not only done properly but was also successful. If paperwork is completed correctly, this lessens the need for judges to delay or continue cases. Freeing up court calendars lessens delaying cases, benefiting all court users.

>> The user-friendly rules and forms program is a Judicial Council project to create court forms designed—excuse me—for self-represented litigants, not attorneys. Court forms were originally designed for attorneys to use to assist their clients. So, they frequently relied on specialized

language—I think you know that is called legalese—and a layout organization scheme that assumed a knowledge of the relevant law. As the proportion of self-represented litigants increased to a majority in numerous case types, including family and adoptions, the Judicial Council determined that the forms could be revised to better serve self-represented litigants and improve access to justice. User-friendly court forms also greatly improve the efficiency of the court-based self-help center, allowing them to serve more members of the public because they can hold workgroups for multiple litigants or multiple parties and forms clinics rather than having to assist each individual person coming to their office. This decreases waiting times and allows people to spend less time at the courthouse. The user-friendly rules and forms program began formal implementation in 2024, but in practice the council has been doing this for years. The new forms include user-friendly improvements such as plain-language terminology. As part of the development of this proposal, the advisory committee sought the input of staff attorneys, court self-help centers, the Academy of [California] Adoption Lawyers, court clerks, judicial officers other than those that sit on the committee and the California Department of Social Services. I think you received at your last meeting a thorough explanation from the Rules Committee. Justice Fujisaki explained how the Rules Committee reviews the forms that the advisory committees propose. We formed a workgroup—I think it’s sometimes called a subcommittee—but we call it a work group of committee members who work diligently to revise and create these forms taking into account the input we received as well as our own experience. The self-help centers identified stepparent adoptions as both the most common adoption types for which they provide assistance and the ones having the most confusing processes for self-represented litigants. As a result, one of the forms you will see in the proposal is a new stepparent adoption request form, separate standalone form called ADOPT-203.

>> Are self-help centers and court clerks also pointed out the numerous continuances required when self-represented litigants arrived at court without the statutorily required pleadings and documents. The committee is also proposing extensive changes and revisions to how to adopt a child in California, form ADOPT-050, to help inform self-represented litigants of all the necessary requirements to proceed with an adoption request.

>> Changes to that form, the info form, included adding guidance about what forms to file and addressed what other documents need to be filed with the form. Again, this is intended to reduce continuances and better explain what could be a very confusing process. Most of the changes built on the existing info form, and they describe what forms need to be filed, what other documents need to be filed with the adoption request form, and we believe by clearly indicating what documents are required as stated this will result in fewer continuances. And I will speak from experience having sat as the adoption judge in Ventura County, it was not unusual to have parties come to court at an adoption—it was usually a pre-adoption hearing—thinking they had done everything correctly (self-represented litigants, generally, but not always; sometimes attorneys), and me having to say, I don’t have everything I need. I need more. Doing my best not to cross the line and provide legal advice because, obviously, we can’t as the self-help centers cannot either. So, I would have to send people on their way saying, “I need something more. I can’t finalize your adoption because I don’t have everything I need.”



>> One of the most common types of family law adoptions is a stepparent adoption. A stepparent who is willing to fill in the role of a parent in a child's life becomes that child's legal parent and is also bestowed all the rights and responsibilities of parenthood. We recognize in California there are many types of families, families that may not look the same as what we see in the media. Our law embraces a myriad of family structures, and adoptions can provide a mechanism for these families to gain recognition and access to the rights and protections of a legal parent-child relationship. Parenthood is determined not just by the genetic bonds they share, but by the involvement a parent has in a child's life and development. The changes in this proposal include language to accommodate many different types of families.

>> So, on behalf of the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, I formally request that the Judicial Council approve this proposal. The advisory committee recommends adopting one new form and revising six forms to clarify and simplify the family law adoption process in California. And we are available to answer any of your questions.

>> Thank you for your presentation. Are there any questions or comments?

>> I actually had a comment. Thank you, Chief. I am so grateful for the work that you are doing on the Family and Juvenile [Law] Advisory Committee. I reviewed your workplan. It is outstanding. Not only do you have a lot to do, but you're getting a lot done. So, thank you. Speaking personally as a person who was a family law judge for several years and a family law attorney, adoption is one of the hardest areas for people to truly understand, and the rules for stepparent adoption are not the same rules for a county adoption, it's not the same rules as for private adoption. So I think this is a very necessary thing. I agree with you that it's going to really save a lot of time, particularly in stepparent adoption area. It's a little more streamlined and focused than some of the others. So, I think this is a wonderful project. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Yes.

>> Maybe to follow on from my colleague, here, thank you for the work you have done. This is meant to be the highlight of every family law judge's experience. On Monday mornings, 8:30, we'd have the stepparent adoptions. Families would show up with a child, nicely dressed up. There'd be the family members there ready to take pictures, and you're agonizing in chambers because you know this adoption is not going to take place today because they don't have all the forms. We work so hard to find work-arounds that would be short of us giving them legal advice, dedicating legal research attorneys, trying to beef up the information that they can receive at the facilitator's office or the self-help center. So, to see the work you have done here to come up with a comprehensive information form is—it's very much needed. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you. Anyone else? Okay.

>> Chief, I'll move approval.

>> Thank you. Is there a second?

>> I'll second.

<< Thank you. All those in favor. Well, first, any further discussion? Judge Rosenberg, I remember. [ Laughter ] All those in favor say aye. Any noes? Any abstentions? This item is approved. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> For our third item we have a report to the Legislature on the disposition of criminal cases according to race and ethnicity of the defendant. We welcome our presenters here today. Ms. Francine Byrne with the Judicial Council Criminal Justice Services, and also Ms. Sal Pipert, the Judicial Council Criminal Justice Services, as well. Welcome.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you, Chief Justice Guerrero, and members of the Judicial Council. We are happy to be here today. My name is Francine Byrne, as the Chief just said. I'm the director of Criminal Justice Services and joined by Sal Pipert. We are going to talk to you today about a report we have been doing for a while, *Dispositions by Race and Ethnicity*. I will give some background of the report and present some of the findings from this year, and then I will turn it over to Sal, who will go into more depth about the data analyses and some opportunities for future reporting and analyses. We are going to wrap it up by discussing next steps and how we want to progress with the report moving forward. The Judicial Council has been mandated to produce this report on disposition of criminal cases according to race and ethnicity. We have been doing so since 2001. Now, we don't have in-house access to the statewide data so we have to get it from the DOJ. This means that we are prohibited from sharing it with any third parties and even from using it for purposes beyond the scope of this actual report. This year, we have two years' worth of data because there were some delays getting the data from DOJ due to data system upgrades and some necessary security requirements related to that. We are here to give you a peek at some of the findings of the report and what we found over time, but we also want to show you some of the important insights the data can offer in helping us understand why the systems work. Okay. So we looked at—as you can see in the report, we looked at four different outcomes. We looked at conviction, whether a person was convicted of a sentence or acquitted or if the case was dismissed. If they were convicted, we looked at whether or not they were

convicted of a felony versus a misdemeanor. For those convicted of a felony, we looked at if they were convicted and sentenced to probation, jail, or prison. And then, finally, we looked at the length of prison sentences for those who received prison time. It's really important to note here that these outcomes are largely determined by plea-bargaining. Almost 97 percent of these are the result of pleas. They don't occur in a vacuum. There's choices all along the way that people need to make. Law enforcement decides who to arrest and who to not arrest. The DAs decide who to charge on and what charges to actually file. Then other actors come into play, such as defense attorneys, victims, and defendants themselves. So the courts can receive the package that is already agreed upon by the parties, but it is their ultimate responsibility to decide whether or not to accept or reject the plea bargains. We may never be able to fully untangle the strands and influences on these dependent outcomes, but we think by breaking them out in this way, we get a little closer to understanding. So, I'm going to present briefly on outcomes from this year's report that you have in your packets, and I will then turn it over to Sal to explain a lot more about the data analyses and what we mean by similarly situated white defendants. So, as you can see, the—sorry. So, looking at the conviction, the likelihood of Hispanic defendants was 2.2 percent more likely than white defendants to receive a conviction. Black defendants were 1.4 percent less likely to do so. When we look at felony versus misdemeanor, Hispanic defendants were 0.1 percent more likely to receive a felony, and Black and Asian and Pacific Islander defendants were 0.8 and 0.1 percent less likely to receive felony sentences. Moving to prison sentences, Hispanic individuals were 1.5 percent more likely to receive a prison sentence relative to white defendants, and there is no statistically significant differences in any of the other race or ethnic categories. Also, with prison length, there was no statistically significant statistics in those categories. Now I will turn it over to Sal, who will get into a lot more information about what the data mean.

>> Thank you, Francine. I'm going to focus on prison sentencing outcome for this presentation to look at historical trends because we have historical context from past reports for this outcome. This is figure C2 in the report, and it shows the raw prison sentencing rate out of all convicted defendants by race over time. This shows back until 2010, but I have looked at all the past reports going all the way back to 1997, and the trend is the same. Black and Hispanic individuals, the green and red lines, are sentenced to prison at higher rates than white and Asian/Pacific Islander individuals, the purple and blue lines. This is, of course, not the whole story. You can't just look at the raw data. Each individual has unique circumstances that may make them more or less likely to be sentenced to prison. What we want to look at is similarly situated defendants. You have to add additional data. Part of what this presentation will show is what happens when we add this additional information to get a more accurate picture of what is going on. So, let's start to narrow this down. One obvious factor that relates to prison sentencing is the type of crime. So, let's only look at individuals arrested on violent crimes. The data set already only includes felony-level arrests. Another major factor in sentencing is the individual's criminal history. So, let's only look at individuals with no prior record. When we look at this subsection, Black and Hispanic individuals are still more likely to be sentenced to prison, again, green and red lines. Again, this shows since 2010 the pattern persists going back to the report on data from 1997. There may still be other features that explain the sentencing

differences across race. For example, perhaps the severity of the current defense. I don't expect you to read all of these details. Don't worry. But these can all be found in the appendix of the report. But I'm trying to give you a sense of how complex these statistical tests are. In order to more closely examine sentences for similarly situated defendants, we used a statistical test that takes into account variations in all these listed features in order to check whether racial differences in sentencing would still exist if everyone had the same criminal history, current defense characteristics, and location. For prison sentencing, when we talk about characteristics of the current defense, we mean the charges for which someone was convicted. We are not just looking at how serious the offense was but also at the maximum possible sentence for those charges. This approach tries to be very precise by setting aside any differences that might have come up earlier in the process. It asks, if two people are convicted of offenses of the same type and severity and with the same possible sentence, do any unexplained differences in the actual sentences still show up? Of course, there are always more individualized circumstances that we can't account for. This is an approximation of similarity based on available data. In these analyses, we used white defendants as the baseline group to compare other groups against and looked at prison sentencing rates for Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, and Hispanic defendants compared to white defendants, which is standard practice in research on racial differences. Historically, we have not always done this level of statistical analyses but now we can because we got better data, which will help us going forward. So, now we have seen the differences in prison sentencing raw and looking at violent offenses with no priors. Now here are the results of the analysis when we account for all the differences we just discussed in order to approximate similarly situated defendants. Again, in these analyses, we are using white defendants as a baseline group so what I am showing in this graph is the percentage point difference in likelihood of being sentenced to prison for Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, and Hispanic defendants who had been convicted of a felony as compared to similarly situated white defendants. In 2021–22 for example, you can see that Hispanic defendants, the green bar, were 1.5 percentage points more likely to receive a prison sentence compared to similarly situated white defendants. What this means is while the actual prison rate for Hispanic defendants was 33.8 percent, the statistical test estimates that the prison rate for these defendants would have been 32.3 percent if everything else were the same but they were white—that 1.5 percentage point difference. This is smaller than the raw differences we saw in the earlier slides, indicating that some of the raw difference in prison sentencing rates is explainable by features other than race. To put this in more concrete terms, that 1.5 percentage points means that for every 1,000 Hispanic individuals convicted of a felony, the model predicts an additional 15 may be sentenced to prison who may not have been sentenced to prison if they were white. There was no statistically significant difference for Black and Asian/Pacific Islander defendants on the outcome of prison sentencing in 2021–22. You can see here that better data matters. The estimates of racial difference appear smaller after we acquired more detailed data between 2018 and 2019, which may indicate that some of these previously unmeasurable features explain some of the variation. It is essential to have accurate detailed data so we can get closer to an accurate measure. You can also see that 2021–22 looks different from the other years, even from 2020, which used the exact same statistical test particularly for Black defendants, who in all prior years had a statistically significant difference in prison

sentencing but did not in 2021–22. We are not sure why this is the case. This could be related to COVID effects, which could have changed the population in ways that decrease disparities. We look forward to continuing our analyses in upcoming years to see if this is a trend or an anomaly. As Francine mentioned, these findings need to be situated appropriately in context. There are many steps and actors involved from arrest dispositions, so it is difficult to pinpoint any one cause of racial differences found. Also, as Francine mentioned, 97 percent of convictions are achieved through plea bargains, which are complex multi-actor negotiations themselves. There are also important data quality limitations and considerations. The more detailed data source we acquired a few years ago has allowed us to perform more detailed analyses. But the Department of Justice data used for this report are still known to be an incomplete record of all the dispositions happening in the state and are a dynamic data source that changes over time. Data provides a great opportunity to understand what is happening within the criminal justice system. There are significant problems with quality of criminal justice data in California and throughout the country. However, there is low hanging fruit and opportunities to improve in this area. We are collaborating with the California Department of Justice and the courts to improve the quality and consistency of disposition reporting. We are increasing our collaboration efforts and have requested longitudinal data that we will be able to get a more in-depth view over time. Thank you. I am available for questions.

>> Thank you for comprehensive presentation and the report that we have in our materials. Is there any comment or questions? Yes?

>> I was wondering if any of your data took into consideration, when you talk about similarly situated defendants and the fact that plea-bargaining happens so early in the process, whether it took into consideration whether these defendants were in custody or out of custody, released on bail?

>> That's a great question. Unfortunately, the Department of justice data does not indicate whether the defendant was in or out of custody at the time, so that cannot be looked at with this data set.

>> So, thank you, super great report. I am wondering if you believe the data has been improved since we have moved towards electronic case management systems and the reporting to the DOJ, although I think it first was a little clunky, but after, you know, the passage of time, I think the reporting to DOJ has become from trial courts faster and providing more robust data. Do you agree with that? Would you like to talk about it?

>> I will say yes, I do think it will improve. It has improved because of the technology by far. You know? You probably know there are literally people by hand trying to match some of these up. Some of the issues is the implementation of technology. Sometimes, before it gets the flow up and running there are often delays. But we are definitely moving in the right direction, and that is part of the tools we need to get this better.

>> Thank you. I saw a hand up. Yes?

>> I'm wondering if you are able to discern whether there are any disparities between defendants that were represented by private council versus either a public defender's office or some other kind of system in which people are assigned council. That is one area. The second was whether there are disparities, distinctive and important disparities, between the counties.

>> Thank you. That's another great question. As to the counsel, the representation, that also is unfortunately not in this data set. So, we would not be able to tell that using the data set from the Department of Justice. As for counties, we have not yet looked at that. We do know which county people are in, and we are using a general control for variances in the counties.

>> It's okay. We were just talking back there whether or not the agreement with DOJ allows us to present the data in those ways. Obviously, there are differences among the counties. So, we will consider looking into that. We are not sure if the agreement allows us to analyze it in those ways right now to present.

>> And another thing I will just say is, the amount of data you need to do this type of analysis where you are looking at these many different features that make people similar means you need a pretty large data set. So, while it may be possible, if allowed, to look at this for some of the larger counties, I imagine some of the smaller counties would not have sufficient data to run this in-depth of an analysis.

>> Okay. Thank you. There are no further questions from councilmembers. Yes? Senator Umberg.

>> Thank you, Madam Chief Justice. Following on Mr. Peters's question, as I understand, the data exists, but the agreement does not allow Judicial Council to access the data. Is that my understanding? Is that correct?

>> On counties specifically? Yes. We do have access to which county it is. We are limited in our agreement with the Department of Justice in what analyses we can publish.

>> So, if the Legislature asks for that data, the Legislature could go ahead and do that analysis. Okay. Thank you very much.

>> Thank you. Thank you again for your presentation. We appreciate it. Now, for our fourth item we have a recommendation on a policy for third-Party uses of court facilities. We welcome our presenters, Judge Bottke, chair of the Judicial Council Real Estate Policies Subcommittee; Justice Brad Hill, chair of the Judicial Council's Executive and Planning Committee; and Ms. Pella McCormick, director of Judicial Council Facilities Services.

>> First of all, on behalf of the Executive and Planning Committee, we want to thank all of you for your great work, Judge Bottke certainly for chairing the committee, Justice David Rubin before you for all of his work, and the key to making this work has been the acknowledgment that we needed a policy, obviously, for all the properties we have statewide. But not only did we need one, but we needed to get it right. And I believe your work, and Pella's work, and the entire staff have done a wonderful job in reaching out to courts, to CEOs and others to make sure we had something everyone could live with. It is something that over time evolved, and I want to thank Michael Giden for his work, right up until the end when we were hearing from CEOs and others saying, have you thought of this? And right up to the end modifications were made. And I will say on behalf of E&P and certainly on behalf of all of you that this is a matter that, in a year if we find that other modifications need to be made, they will be made. So, it's a living document, one that we think we are as close to, hopefully, perfect as we can get at this moment, but we will be making changes along the way. And I did want to just ever so briefly echo the Chief's comments and Shelley's comments with respect to Pella and Michael, both of whom worked so much on this project. Of course, I've worked with Pella for years on, as chair of CFAC. You know, whenever you would pop up on the screen in a Zoom meeting, all was well. And it didn't matter whether I called you in the middle of the day talking about a roof in Tehama or a \$500 million project, you had the answer immediately. And your guidance and what you have done for the program has been immeasurable. We thank you. And Michael, you are like the doctor who walks in, you know, you are just calm, and collected, and kind of the Marcus Welby of the legal profession. I probably dated myself by that reference. But you just have a wonderful way, and you always come up with the answer. We feel better along the way getting there. So, both of you, to lose both of you is huge. Huge for all of us, certainly huge for me because I would see them on Zoom calls it seems like every other day. We are going to miss you. Thank you both for what you have done, what you have meant to us, and what you have meant to the branch. At this point, I will turn it over to Judge Bottke.

>> Thank you, Justice Hill, Madam Chief Justice, and members of the council. The great thing about having the intro slide is that Justice Hill took care of the entire intro for me. I really can't say anything more than he did on the intro. But I do want to of course introduce Pella, who's here with me, and Jeremy Ehrlich, who is one of the staff attorneys to Facilities and Real Estate, and to echo a few things that Justice Hill said off the bat. This has been a long process. There has been an interim policy for 15 years give or take. But this policy really has been in the works for the last three or four years. It started with Justice Rubin as the chair, and then I took over. There has been an enormous amount of work that has been put in by staff, by PJs, by CEOs, members of the public that were able to comment on this, and we truly believe that this policy presents an outstanding compromise that works for everyone. As Justice Hill said, it will be workable. It will be changed, if need be, in the future. We will be able to answer any questions you have at the end. I will turn it over to Pella for overview of Judicial Council real estate.

>> Thank you, Judge Bottke, and thank you everyone for the kind words. A facilities program's mission is to provide uniformly safe, secure, and well-maintained court facilities. Statewide, the Judicial Council real estate portfolio consists of 22 million square feet and 430 properties. The

program strives to optimize our limited resources by using methodical, structured practices to achieve consistent outcomes and mitigate risk. Many Judicial Council properties—oh, I am leaning on it, sorry. Many Judicial Council properties have third-party noncourt entities such as justice partners, vendors, or cafés that occupy space in the facilities. As the tallest structures in their communities, several courthouse rooftops are licensed to cellular phone carriers for installation of antenna towers. The commercial filming industry regularly requests permission to use the exterior of nonoperating court facilities to film on location to create for-profit films and videos. Facilities also receives requests from noncourt entities to use court parking lots either to provide parking for special events or to support events such as parade staging or community festivals. Currently, Facilities has 230 occupancy agreements and issues more than 150 event licenses each year. In addition to identifying terms and conditions of the occupancy or use, these agreements and licenses require the third-party user to have insurance, which mitigates risk. Judge Bottke will provide an overview of the third-party use.

>> So, the question comes up (any people have), why we need a policy? Well, policy purpose is to try to establish, as you can see, guidelines across the state: 58 different counties with courthouses. We have six district courts of appeals, and of course we have the Supreme Court, and we wanted to be able to serve each one of those courts but also public needs in the public's use of those buildings. How could we best use the facilities and resources but make sure it works for the court, the public, and also mitigating liability? Having standardization across the board was absolutely key because if you talk about PJs in 10 different courts, they will give you 10 different answers with respect to how the policy was enforced, not just from courtroom to courtroom but courthouse to courthouse and perhaps county to county. We want to support the mission of the courts, obviously, their operations, not interrupt those, but also be able to provide that fair use for the public in what ultimately are public facilities. And, as I said, 15 years give or take in the works we have the interim policy that has worked very well, but there were areas that needed to be improved. This policy goes beyond what the interim policy had because it does encompass all different types of occupancies and events, and it critically provides as you can see guidance for filming and rooftop uses, which is becoming more and more of an issue as more and more people decide they would like to film in a courthouse for any different purpose. Civics education, which I will get to in another slide, super important. But as I said earlier, to mitigate that risk, we wanted to make sure the agreements are standard, we had insurance in place when it needed to be there, and we had third-party accountability for those people who are coming in in essence as guests to use the public facility, albeit a courthouse. We wanted it to be consistent across the board, the administration from both the court side but also the Real Estate and Facilities side would be standardized. And there would be a fee structure, as well. You will see all of that in the accompanying materials. As you can see, the summary—I won't go into each one of these. This is in the policy itself, in the materials you have. Obviously, the scope, and it goes all the way through each specific issue, and I'll get to CEI (#4) in a second, through Exclusions and Limitations. While it seems very detailed, we were able to pare it down to the bare essentials that work for both the courts and the public. As Justice Hill said, again, this can be worked through with respect to any issues that come up as the policy is implemented. Certainly, suggestions will be taken into consideration. The development timeline



here talks about really the last two years, although this had predated—much of the work had predated this, as well. We have the Real Estate Policies Subcommittee committee, which has included over the years CEOs, trial court judges, along with Court of Appeal justices as well. We put out the initial proposal in May of 2023. And it went out for comment. The comment period and JRS review—that’s the Joint Rules Subcommittee of the PJs and the CEOs—reviewed it first. There was feedback that was addressed. Let me get to that. We had an enormous amount of feedback. You can see that in the comments chart. While obviously each specific item cannot be implemented, we did our best to do that. And what it came down to was, the civics education initiative, so to speak, really became the key. And we worked with the CEOs and the PJs on that feedback, came up with a more workable policy, and then presented that at the Presiding Judges Advisory Committee and CEO Advisory Committee meeting, and we now have the revised proposal as of October 2024. And with respect to that feedback, as you can see here, these bullet points are super important. We have the need for simplified local processes for certain civics and educational events. The bottom right, you can see PJs and CEOs said these types of activities—student competitions, field trips and tours, ceremonial functions, and trainings and workshops—were super important to the court and to the public. We took that into consideration, reworked the policy to make sure these CEI events could have the community participate in these courthouses that are actually, of course, publicly owned but not interfere with judicial functions. The courts can implement their own review process with respect to how this is submitted to them, then they can get help from real estate and facilities when they need it. Excuse me. There are resources available for the courts. You’ll see those in the attached documents. And Facilities and Real Estate is available pretty much at any given time to address any questions that a court may have. Certainly, there is a timeliness issue. They would like to have more time if they could, but they are there to address issues on the fly and that is certainly something that was brought up in public comment, and that is something they will certainly address as it comes up. With respect to those resources, Pella, you might have more on those.

>> I sure do. In addition to the policy document, several resource guidelines have been created for the courts and third-party applicants, including an application, fee schedules, and a license agreement template. Additionally, we have an extensive frequently asked questions document has been developed and will be available online to the courts. The FAQs will be a living document and regularly updated as needs arise. Facilities recognizes that the requests for third-party use of court facilities are often unique. Staff are available and happy to assist the courts to navigate the third-Party use process. Facilities appreciates your continued support. I’m happy to answer any questions.

>> Thank you, yes.

>> I don’t have a question as much as I have a comment. I am fortunate enough to sit in Shasta County Superior Court, and we are in a new, beautiful courthouse. And every day I am talking to the court staff and to the jurors about stewardship of the courthouse—the fact that we—stewardship is the careful and responsible management of something that is entrusted to us, and

so, I have sent this in an email to Judge Bottke but I also want to express it to Pella. Pell, sincerely, thank you on behalf of Shasta County superior court for your work on our courthouse. I see this policy as helping guide us in our stewardship of our court facilities and giving us uniformity. And I know what a difficult task this must have been because I know if you surveyed 10 courts you got 10 diverse responses about facility use. But I just want you to know I truly appreciate it because I think we need that uniformity and guidance because we are stewards of these facilities. So, thank you very much for your efforts.

>> Thank you for your comment. Yes.

>> Thank you, Chief. I don't have a question, but I do have a comment. I wanted to extend my appreciation for the work of Judge Bottke, Ms. McCormick, and Mr. Ehrlich for giving us an opportunity to weigh in on the final product that we see today. I had the privilege of being the chair of the Court Execs Advisory Committee, and it was at a time when there was an escalated level of interest in the final outcome, largely because there is a huge commitment that we all have towards civics education, but also partnering with stakeholders who utilize these facilities in ways that are intended to further the mission that we have of access, etc. There were a lot of questions, there were a lot of concerns, and I'm so very pleased to see that there was collaboration in what we are seeing right now. It takes balance in allowing us to continue with these programs, but also reducing exposure that potentially the branch would otherwise face in the absence of some of these mechanisms. One thing we also heard was that the turnaround time may be delayed. And hearing there's a commitment to provide resources so responses and approvals could be elevated to, you know, an escalated level because sometimes we get some of these requests on a short time. But anyway, I wanted to say thank you in giving us an opportunity to weigh in on this final product, which I think is an outstanding resolution. So, thank you.

>> Thank you. Seeing no further comment—

>> Chief, if I could, before, I did want to personally thank—you know, you always forget people. But this has been a 3-year +15-year process. I certainly want to thank Justice Hill, but all the PJs, CEOs, the council staff, the Real Estate and Facilities staff, and of course, the fellow members of the reps committee. Specifically, Justice Ruben, Michael Giden, again, wishing him for the 10th time you will hear this hour, good luck in retirement along with Pella and Tamer. But Mary Bustamante, Kathy Kunitake, and Jeremy Ehrlich were absolutely critical in bringing this policy out and making sure it was right. When you get the feedback from people, like Mr. Yamasaki working with Judge Hernandez and others, it's fantastic. But they were really the ones that made it happen. Jeremy is wearing his bowtie in deference to me today. I'm glad to see that. But really, it couldn't have been done. It was truly a group effort. That includes members of the public with their comments through the formal comment process and also contacting me and others directly. So, thank you very much.

>> Thank you, too. Thank you all for the fabulous teamwork in putting this together. At this point I will entertain a motion to move approval of the policy.

>> I would be happy to move approval.

>> Thank you. Is there a second.

>> I'll second.

>> Thank you, any further discussion? All those in favor say aye. Any noes or abstentions? Thank you. The item is approved. And now we have recommendations on the Judicial Council's 2025 legislative priorities. We welcome our presenters, Justice Stacy Boulware Eurie, the chair of the Judicial Council Legislation Committee, and we welcome Mr. Cory Jaspersen, director of Judicial Council Governmental Affairs.

>> Okay?

>> Thank you, again. Good morning, Chief, and fellow councilmembers. Each year the council adopts legislative priorities to further key council objectives in the upcoming year. In connection with our report, which is contained in your meeting materials, Corey and I are here to present the Legislation Committee's recommendations to you for 2025. The Legislation Committee recommends several priorities for 2025, starting with ongoing efforts to obtain stable and reliable funding to address annual increases in baseline operations and to enable planning for the future. Priorities include improving physical access to the courts and expanding access for branch business that can be done effectively and efficiently online, and increase security to safeguard personnel, the public, and court systems from physical, online, and cyber threats. I would note the first two of those three bullets listed are in keeping with similar priorities the council has adopted annually since 2014. We recommend continuing to seek funding for judgeships overall and particularly for judicial officers in counties with the greatest need. I would note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the planned judicial officer time study and workload caseweights update won't be conducted until 2025, so the 2024 judicial needs assessment has been delayed. We recommend that we continue to promote the availability of verbatim records of court proceedings by working collaboratively to address court reporter shortages. The committee recommends the council seek legislative authorization for the disposition of unused courthouses with proceeds being directed to the State Court Facilities Construction Fund. We recommend the council include or continue its support of legislation that will help the branch improve operational efficiencies including cost-saving measures. And has been done in years past and pursuant to rule 10.12(a) of the Rules of Court, we recommend the council delegate to the Legislation Committee the authority to take positions or provide comments and requested feedback on behalf of the council, provided the input is consistent with the council's established policies. Cory will take over to provide a bit of a refresher on how Judicial Council-sponsored legislation is developed and shepherded through the process.

>> Thank you, Justice Boulware Eurie, Chief, members of the council, good morning, it's great to be here. I'm excited for a legislative session coming up on December second. So, it will be on us before we know it. We have a graphic put up to provide a visual representation of the pathway that Judicial Council–sponsored legislation would follow through our deliberative process. This process typically takes about a year as the bill idea or the need for legislation is identified. That is then tasked out to our subject-matter advisory committees. Some proposals may go through more than one subject-matter advisory committee. It would come to the Legislation Committee for review and determination if the proposal is ready to go forward. At that point it would go out for invitation to comment and receive public comment. That is typically a 45-day or 60-day process. Public comment is then received. There is response to the public comment that comes in. Sometimes, if the public comment is significant and the proposal might need some additional work, it might get more work back at the subject-matter advisory committee before finally coming back to Leg. Committee for a final time and then to the Judicial Council for ultimate approval, and then on to the Legislature, where Senator Umberg and his colleagues will put it through their own deliberative process, twice. And so—

>> At least. [Laughter]

>> Definitely. And we are actually going to have a great example coming up on the next item of a JC-sponsored bill to update the juror oaths. So, you can see how that went through the process here. This is also basically the same process, minus the public comment period, that we take any proposed legislation through when we are responding to bill ideas coming from the Legislature. And then, finally, on the back end, there is quite a bit of activity that happens after the legislative session has wrapped up and final action has taken place on the bills. We have an opportunity outside of the regular budget development process, which is something that starts in September of each year. There is a separate legislative BCP process that happens anytime the Governor signs legislation that would have a fiscal impact. The impacted entity has 10 calendar days to submit a legislative BCP to the administration for consideration of funding. It doesn't mean it will get funded, but we have the opportunity to present our justification for why additional funds would be needed. My team at Governmental Affairs, we put out the annual new laws summary that should actually be coming out in the next few days. I think we are working our final draft. And so, that would go out to all the courts, to have an idea of the bills that would have an impact on court operations and procedures, etc., are in that publication. We also quite frequently, if there are bills that might need a bit more explanation and guidance, memoranda will be coming out from the various subject-matter experts on specific bills. We also are very involved with all the advisory committees looking at the new bills that have been signed to see if there are any rule changes, form changes, jury instructions that might be necessary to make sure that those items get put into the annual agenda plans for the various advisory committees, then finally, we have LIAP (Legislative Implementation Action Plan). This is a massive spreadsheet that Alona in our office keeps track of. Anytime there's a specific report, study, rule, form, jury instruction that the Legislature has specifically required in statute, we track it on that sheet to make sure that we get literally thousands of pages of supplemental

information due to Legislature and the Governor on time and we don't miss anything. And with that, I will turn it back to the Justice Boulevard Eurie to wrap up.

>> Thank you. Before wrapping up, I think I would be remiss not to state, even though this is a fairly direct and streamlined presentation this morning, as we all know none of the work of this council gets done without the tireless effort of staff. Cory's shop is diverse. It's dynamic. And the amount of work that goes into it, I think is not well understood. Again, before we start the legislative year, I just want to say thank you to his office, to each of the tenured and new members of the Legislation Committee who are all ready to roll up their sleeves for what lies ahead. To closeout, we want to acknowledge and really emphasize that our recommendations are first, foremost, and always guided by the council's strategic plan, and the council's overall goal to improve the quality of justice and advance the independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice to and for all of California's court users. With that, Chief, we are happy to answer any questions that you or fellow councilmembers may have.

>> Thank you for the wonderful presentation. Are there any questions or comments? Oh, yes, sorry.

>> Thank you, Chief. I wanted to commend you for the work that you did. And the report—I read it thoroughly. We love at CJA (California Judges Association) the relationship we have with you because we work quite a bit together and quite well together on legislative priorities. So, thank you for the mention in the report. We are looking forward to doing legislative priorities coming up next month. We will talk about the CJA. Judicial security is such a big one. Recently, as you know, there was an incident in Los Angeles County, one of the courthouses there. Judicial security is one of the things on our list of priorities. And we will be looking forward to working with you on those things as well as others.

>> Thank you. Yes, Senator Umberg?

>> Thank you, Madam Justice. I'm going to abstain on this matter for some obvious reasons. But just as a matter of process at the risk of kicking a horse that has been kicked repeatedly, the best way for, I think, the judiciary to advance its legislative agenda is to demonstrate to individual legislators the need for whatever it may be so they have an understanding of how—I know this sounds bizarre—but how the judiciary branch works. And to that end, thank you, Judge Hernandez. I did get my invitation to come visit with the court one on one. And I would encourage judges to do that. Thank you.

>> Thank you. I think those visits are so important, and having done some now, I just recognize when we are asking as an example for remote to be extended, they can actually see the benefits of remote proceedings, so I think they have been particularly effective. Thank you for your encouragement to continue that. Anyone else?

>> Chief, maybe a quick comment, I just want to underscore something you said at the end, on Justice Boulware Eurie. The Leg. staff and the Leg. Committee does so much work, and you are very responsive to the advisory committees channeling information in your direction. Cory and your crew keep us super well informed about activity in the Legislature. So it seems we get reports, very thorough, it's very necessary. Thank you both. I think the report is great. Everybody should recognize the amount of work that goes on with the Leg. Committee and Governmental Affairs is enormous. You know? We can't really explain it adequately. But thank you. I move approval.

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

>> [Overlapping responses]

>> Ooh, everybody. [ Laughter ] [ Inaudible ] Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye. Any noes? We have one abstention. Any additional abstentions? Thank you. The item is approved. Thank you, again. Next, we have a recommendation on Judicial Council–sponsored legislation on juror and prospective juror oaths using plain language. We welcome our presenters, Mr. Darrell Parker, Court Executive Officer for Santa Barbara Superior Court, and Mr. Stephen Michael Tow, Judicial Council Business Management Services.

>> Is it—

>> Tow, like wow!

>> I will never forget that.

>> Good morning, Chief and council members. I am Darrell Parker. I'm the chief executive officer in Santa Barbara Superior Court, but more importantly today I chair the Judicial Administration Management Subcommittee of the Court Executives Advisory Committee, and with me is Stephen wow!, senior analyst with the Jury Improvement Program in the Office of Court Research. We have a short presentation for an action item being brought by the Judicial Administration Management Subcommittee, or JAMS. This proposal is to change the language of the oaths that jurors and prospective jurors take during voir dire, the examination of the qualifications to serve and before being seated in a trial. The language for administering the oath is governed by California Code of Civil Procedure section 232. Thanks to Cory for queuing us up. This is the current legislative process. Priorities for jury related reform typically start with a committee or working group. This proposal began in JAMS. They reviewed the proposal in the context of the branch's overall legislative priorities, provided direction, and approved next steps. It was submitted for public comments to provide stakeholders and others an opportunity to share their feedback. And Stephen Tow then incorporated the public comments into an updated proposal that has been approved by the relevant committees before moving to the council for your decision today. Jurors represent the largest population of citizens in California who interact with our court system. As a result, their perception of courts in the

California judicial branch are affected by their service on jury duty. Expanding plain-language oaths for jurors aligns with the judicial branch's strategic plan, specifically goal one for access, fairness, diversity, and inclusion, as well as goal four for equality, justice, and service to the public. Plain-language initiatives for juror instructions date back to the 1990s Blue Ribbon Commission on Jury System Improvement. There are currently two instructions committees, one for criminal cases and one for civil cases. However, juror oaths were never reviewed by the commission or the subsequent task force on jury system improvements. And there has not previously been a group assigned to review them. As a result, they have not been updated since 1989. Until today. This is the current oath given to prospective jurors prior to beginning during jury selection. I was a courtroom clerk for a while. I will read it to you without asking you all to raise your right hands. "Do you and each of you understand that you will accurately and truthfully answer under penalty of perjury all questions propounded to you concerning your qualifications and competency to serve as a trial juror in the matter pending before this court and that failure to do so may subject you to criminal prosecution." I do not use the word *propounded* in every day. I imagine most of you don't as well. This is the proposed language alternative. "Do you understand and agree under the penalty of perjury that you will accurately and truthfully answer all questions about your qualifications and ability to serve as a juror in this case and that failure to do so may result in criminal prosecution?" I hope you agree that's a little simpler to understand. This is the current oath given to jurors who will be seated at the actual jury for a given trial. "Do you and each of you understand and agree that you will well and truly try the cause now pending before this court and a true verdict render according only to the evidence presented to you and to the instructions of the court?" Our proposal is, "Do you understand and agree that you will carefully consider the case being heard in this court and that you will reach a verdict based only on the evidence presented to you and the instructions on the law given by the court?" We are recommending today that the council approve this proposal in order to align juror oaths with existing jury instructions, and if approved, staff will prepare a draft bill that will be reviewed by Judicial Council's Legislative Committee as part of the branch's overall legislative priorities, which will then be submitted as a proposed bill to a friendly legislators for their support to introduce it during the next legislative session. I want to give special thanks to Stephen for all his work. He does a great deal of work single-handedly for the state of California in impacting jury operations—one of those quiet, unspoken heroes of jury, I think—and is worthy of a lot of recognition today. I want to thank the members of JAMS for their work and participation on moving this forward, and the council and the Chief for your attention to this matter. Any questions? Steven, do you have any comments?

>> We are here to answer questions. Thank you.

>> Thank you for the presentation. Much improved, it's quite evident. Any comments or questions? Hearing none, is there a motion to move approval? Oh, did you have a question or comment?

>> [ Inaudible ] Okay, thank you.

>> We will do it the first way. Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye. Any noes or abstentions?

>> Abstain.

>> Thank you. The motion is approved, and the item is approved. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>>> To wrap up our meeting today we have a very special presentation of our 2024 Distinguished Service Awards. I want to welcome—I think they are all here. Yes. It’s so nice to see all of you. Our award honorees are as follows, although they do not even need to be named. They are easily recognizable. We have Justice William Bedsworth, we have Judge Terry Friedman, and we have Ms. Melissa Fowler-Bradley. We also have their families, friends, and colleagues who we welcome here. As you know, the council created these awards 30 years ago to honor dedicated public servants for all of the following: the breadth and impact of their contributions, the nature of the work accomplished, the time expended outside of normal work hours, their diversity and success in surmounting challenges and limitations, and their contributions to advancing the council’s strategic goals. Over the past 30 years, the council has honored 119 individuals and two organizations for their commitment to these goals and objectives, including their contributions to access, fairness, diversity, and inclusion, which is the council’s number one strategic goal. This afternoon we celebrate three—well, it’s not afternoon yet, right?—we celebrate three extraordinary people who serve as role models to current and future members and leaders of our judicial branch. Their dedication has helped strengthen the public’s trust and confidence in our justice system. I’m going to now turn it over to Justice Hill to introduce us to these exceptional awardees.

>>> Thank you very much, Chief. I am very, very honored to be part of this ceremony today where we are recognizing three truly extraordinary people. Our first honoree today is Justice William Bedsworth. [ Applause ] When you mention Justice Bedsworth’s name to people, you hear the following accolades: “a wonderful person and colleague,” “a brilliant justice,” “beautifully crafted opinions.” But you hear just as often, “Did you just read that column? Wasn’t that terrific? He is one of the best writers, and you just can’t read that column and not be uplifted and enjoy every single word,” and, “his columns have always been thought-provoking, interesting, and fun.” We are about to have a column right here.

>>> Putting your speech on your phone is perhaps not always a great idea. [ Laughter ]

>>> Phones have minds of their own oftentimes. I think we have all been there. Even though Justice Bedsworth is retiring, he promises to keep writing and bringing smiles to our faces for a long time to come. Justice Bedsworth was appointed in 1997. And he has dedicated over three



decades to serving the people of California. He is known not only for his legal acumen but also for his impact on civility within the legal profession. He has been a tireless advocate for civility in the courtroom, having served on California's Civility Task Force, where his voice helped to elevate the importance of respectful dialogue between lawyers, judges, and opposing counsel. And now we will turn to a video to highlight more about your career and extraordinary life. ♪

>> My first impression is great guy, really loved the law, definitely focused on writs appeals and research and writing, even in his early stage of his career. He was writing, it set a very high bar. I think his opinions certainly will be his legacy. And I also think, really, his emphasis on professionalism and civility.

>> It has been years now that the California Civility Task Force has been working on trying to improve civility in California, but not nearly as many years as Justice Bedsworth has been working to improve civility in California. And particularly, the lawyers from Orange County but not exclusively the lawyers from Orange County insisted that we get Bill Bedsworth, Justice Bedsworth, on this task force. He has added to the canon of cases in California that extol lawyers and insist that lawyers be civil to one another.

>> 2011, *Kim v. Westmoore Partners*: "Our profession is rife with cynicism, awash in incivility. Lawyers and judges of our generation spend a great deal of time lamenting the loss of a golden age when lawyers treated each other with respect and courtesy. It's time to stop talking about the problem and act on it. For decades, our profession has given lip service to civility. All we have gotten from it is tired lips. We have reluctantly concluded lips cannot do the job; teeth are required. In this case, those teeth will take the form of sanctions." His work was pioneering in that area.

>> He's taught at various law schools. He's taught his law students that civility is critically important. It's not just a nice thing. It makes you a better lawyer, and it increases your chances for success. People know who Justice Bedsworth all over the state of California largely because he is such a skilled writer. He writes opinions that people want to read, especially on certain subjects like ethics and civility. People all around the state read them. He also has written a column that started out in the Orange County Bar Association's monthly magazine. Now it is syndicated all around the country, as I understand it. And it's very funny, it's educational, it's entertaining, and everybody in the legal community reads it.

>> He is just a delightful human being. He is an enjoyable person to spend time with. His colleagues love him. I mean, he is just the model for a Court of Appeals justice. [ Applause ]

>> Now to present the award to Justice Bedsworth, Justice Joan Irion.

>> Thank you, Justice Hill. Chief Justice. Hey, Beds. Members of the council, ladies and gentlemen, what a great occasion this is. Absolutely wonderful. We gather to honor not only Judge Bedsworth but Judge Friedman, and all the people who have contributed so much to the

administration of justice in California, all to the benefit of the people of the state of California. Well, as you can see, I know Judge Bedsworth and affectionately refer to him as Beds, as many of my colleagues in the Fourth District do. And his career is a testament to his dedication to law and, as we saw in the video, civility within the legal profession and his ability to balance scholarship with a substantial dose of humor. Now, I don't know if you all know Beds very well. But let me give you a little insight into his humor. I asked him—it's okay, Beds—I asked him, "Hey, Beds, how are you doing?" He said, "Joan, I am being held together with chicken wire and bubblegum, but I'm doing great." Boy, could I relate. He was appointed to the Court of Appeal in 1997. And boy, did we get a good one. He is a trailblazer in civil rights as we heard in the video. His opinion in *People vs. Garcia* is a landmark ruling in the fight for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights. His decision helped pave the way for legislative change in California, prohibiting the preemptory jury challenges based on sexual orientation. This is regarded, actually, as the first gay rights case in California, and that is a testament. It also solidifies his legacy as a champion for equality. We saw in the video that he served on California's Task Force on Civility, something that we all know is too frequently lacking in our profession between lawyers and between lawyers and the bench. And his work, thankfully, has had a lasting, lasting impact on how practitioners practice the law in California. And we also heard about his nationally recognized syndicated column, "Terminal Waste of Space." I read it. Perhaps you do, too. But we are not the only ones. Members of the public read it. And his insightful comments, and that it has earned him numerous awards, including a 2019 California newspaper publishers award for best newspaper column: bravo. His unique voice really helps make the law more understandable and relatable. You know? Let me give you a little example, if you have not read the most recent column after he retired. It was pretty good, Beds. He was talking about how things seem to be changing so, so fast in this world. And he says, you know, he is sort of self-reflecting. And he says, I think I am kind of a carburetor guy in a fuel-injected world. He teaches. He is training the next generation of legal talent. He has been recognized repeatedly in the legal community for his work, including the David Sills Award, and today, we will honor him with the Judicial Council's highest award. He is actually multifaceted. I don't know if you know this, but he is an avid sports fan: baseball and hockey. And in fact, he spent 15 years as a National Hockey League goal coach. I'm told he has got a 2017 Stanley Cup ring. I guess he has. So, with over three decades of service on the bench, his career is a testament to the dedication, integrity, and hard work that has made him one of California's most respected jurors. His career reflects what the judiciary can offer, the best of what the judiciary can offer: compassion, intelligence, humor—a good dose of humor—and unwavering commitment to justice. Beds, for all you are and all you do and have done, the Judicial Council wants to present to you it's highest award, the Distinguished Service Award. And its heavy. Don't drop it.

[ Laughter and Applause ]

>> Would you like to say a few remarks?

>> Actually, I would just like to stand and stare at it.

>> Wow. Once before I die, I hope to be given an introduction I can live up to. Today is obviously not that day. I am certainly happy to have it. I want to thank Justice Irion and all the people who put together a video and went through all that effort. An award like this one, especially a lifetime achievement award presented by a prestigious body that I have a great deal of respect for, makes you feel like you should have something to offer in return. After 53 years in the profession, I feel like I should have something profound to say to you, something meaningful. I got nothing. I am just not really wired for deep, meaningful, and profound, which is kind of how I got here. When I first joined the Court of Appeals, Justice Rylaarsdam asked me what I wanted my legacy to be. I said, legacy? I just want to get as many of them right as I can. And the result is, I am the happiest man you have ever met. My life is so good, it's beginning to undermine my faith in a just God. If God were just, she would not allow me to live the life I have had. I have gotten to spend the last half-century in the company of lawyers. I have gotten to share with them not only the battles that a truly great justice system requires, but the joys that hanging out with smart, funny, dedicated people can bring, and it has been a hell of a great ride. And today epitomizes how great the ride has been. So, why am I leaving? Why did I retire? I have told every extern, every intern, every law clerk, every law student, every young ear I have had access to that you don't come into this profession to get rich and famous. You come into it to become proud and happy. I am there. I am proud of what I have done. I am happy with my life. It is time to give someone else a shot at the best job in the system. And I don't mean the legal system. I mean the solar system. So, the only thing I have to say today is, thank you. Thank you for the work you contribute to our profession as members of the Judicial Council. Thank you for this wonderful award and all the effort you have put in to making me feel good. Thank you for bringing me up here on a weekend where I can watch my beloved Cal Bears play football tomorrow. And my most important thank you, thank you to this profession that I am so privileged and honored to have been part of for being the good, decent, brave, and honorable people I expected you to be when I signed on. You have not let me down. I leave our courts in good hands and with gratitude. Thank you very much. [ Applause ]

>> Moving remarks. Our next Distinguished Service Awardee is Judge Terry Friedman. [ Applause ] Judge Friedman is a trailblazer who has devoted his life to public service. At every stage of his career, one could easily cast his actions and dedication as exemplifying profiles in courage. In the Legislature, he took on the special interests and won. As president of the California Judges Association, he was the leader of the group in a critical time in its history and guided it to new heights. And as a judge he was known as a compassionate and caring person who was admired by colleagues on the bench and across the state. And as a fellow Judicial Council member, Terry walked the halls of Sacramento on behalf of the judicial branch where he was greeted as a returning hero by Democrats and Republicans alike. The respect they had for him was immense. Judge Friedman served on the Superior Court of Los Angeles County for 15 years. His career has been defined by a deep commitment to improving the lives of children and families and ensuring fairness and safety within the court system. Judge Friedman's dedication to juvenile justice extended far beyond the bench. He played a key role in the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care, helping shape recommendations that improve safety, permanency, and well-being. Judge Friedman also

worked to improve access to justice for underserved communities as chair of the Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee. He has worked tirelessly to provide legal representation to low-income individuals, ensuring that those with the greatest need have access to a fair hearing. Let's now turn to video for more information about Terry and his remarkable career. ♪

>> When he became a judge, in Los Angeles they have a tradition of sending new judges to juvenile court. I marked that calendar because he was named Juvenile Court Judge of the Year in 2001 by the Juvenile Court Judges of California. And we monitor legislative efforts to have anything to do with kids. Well, now we had someone we could turn to. He had a game plan for the successful passage of legislation. He and I were on, I think, the Blue Ribbon Commission, which was a major effort bringing together 30 or 40 experts from around the state to address best practices in juvenile court. And Terry was right in the middle of writing policy. Terry had an enormous impact because he got it. He knew what juvenile court was supposed to be.

>> I had the opportunity to work with him primarily on the Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Implementation Committee. There were a number of projects—housing, custody, guardianship—that are really designed to address the challenge when one side is represented and the other isn't. So, Judge Friedman served on the committee for many years. He, again, he was a wonderful person because he had the background in legal services so understood many of the issues, but also with his experience in the Legislature. He was also good about listening to everyone in the committee and trying to come up with good solutions. Judge Friedman brought together the understanding of the legal services community and the efforts to try to provide representation for low-income people with the understanding of the court system. Having people who have that focus on how we can make the law work for all people, not just people who can afford attorneys, is incredibly valuable.

>> I first got to know Judge Friedman when I served as director of pro bono services here at Bet Tzedek. He became a board member once he left the bench. He has been a board member and, at one point, the board chair. He, for me, is part of that core group of board members who I rely on. He is incredibly smart and knowledgeable about the law. He is incredibly empathetic. So, it makes him an incredible partner for the entire community when it comes to access to justice issues. We all in California are very fortunate to have a public advocate like Judge Friedman in our state. [ Applause ]

>> Now to present the award to Judge Friedman, Diego Cartagena, the director and CEO of Bet Tzedek. [ Applause ]

>> Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for this opportunity. And if I could, Chief Justice Guerrero, it is a true pleasure to be before you and before this council. I have had the pleasure of knowing Judge Friedman—and I usually refer to him as Terry because he is such a down-to-earth individual—for 12 years now, going on 13 years. And one of the things I would like to point out that you have heard on the video is, he gets it. It is incredibly important for the

communities that organizations like Bet Tzedek serves to have individuals on the bench, in the Legislature, and on our boards who understand where our clients come from and the struggles that they face. To think of the fact that Judge Friedman was in the juvenile court. Folks might not know this, but Los Angeles has the largest foster care system in the country. It is not New York, it is not other cities, it is Los Angeles. This was a system that, at one point, the courtrooms were in the same building as our criminal courts. And you would have children whose feet could not reach the ground sitting next to or very close to criminals in their orange jumpsuits. And it is hard to imagine what these children must be thinking, must be facing, or what their parents must be thinking or facing. So, it's incredibly important to have someone like Judge Friedman thinking through these issues and making sure that everyone felt like the courtroom was open for them, and that justice would be meted out fairly and with their rights in mind. It is also incredibly important to keep in mind the work Judge Friedman did with regards to the Shriver project. Everyone is aware of the justice gap and how we struggle every single day to meet the needs of low-income individuals. To have someone like Judge Friedman, who was the president and CEO of Bet Tzedek for many years and is well aware of what it meant to try to secure legal representation when the question at hand was whether or not you would wake up tomorrow and have a roof over your head, whether or not you as a domestic violence survivor would be able to retain custody of your children, and many, many other legal issues that impact the very core of who you are and what your rights are, we have Judge Friedman leading that charge to make sure that individuals would have access to justice through self-help centers, and there are countless individuals that have gone through those centers and benefited from the work that Judge Friedman put into that project. And it is wonderful for us to be able to call him a colleague and friend now on the board of Bet Tzedek. I did not exaggerate when I mentioned that he is on my speed dial. He is someone I rely on for his counsel, his wisdom, his leadership and experience. And when he joins the board meetings, the executive committee meetings, you can see everyone sit up a little bit straighter. And they pay attention to what Judge Friedman says because of that wisdom and experience. We are all very fortunate for that. So, Judge Friedman, Terry, it is my honor to present you with this award. [ Applause ]

>> I'm afraid I'm going to drop this. Well, it's clearly a spectacular honor for which I am so grateful for to receive this beautiful award. I want to thank the Chief and the council for selecting me. When I received the news, I was a bit mystified. Why me? And this morning has helped confirm some of my suspicions that Bet Tzedek and Diego might have had something to do with it, Justice Hill, my old comrade from CJA and the council may have had something to do with it. I thank each of you for your kind and heartfelt words you expressed this morning. They mean the world to me. So many people to thank. I want to thank not only our current Chief Justice, but Chief Justice George and the Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye, who gave me so many opportunities to serve this branch on the council and various commissions and committees. I am very grateful for those opportunities. I thank the outstanding, superlative staff of the Judicial Council, and in my career I have encountered lots of large staffs. I have to say the staff of the Judicial Council stands at the top apart, above all the rest. And I want to pay tribute to the Administrative Director for most of the years that I was doing this work on the council, Bill Vickrey, who was a leader in the effort to expand access to justice in California

and was always kind and inclusive, for me. I want to thank my dear friends who are here, today. I hope we didn't cause a stir when we came into the room earlier. But I have very dear friends from decades and decades of my life who are here today to celebrate. So, thank you. It means the world for me for you to be here today. Mostly, I want to thank my family, my beautiful wife and wonderful daughter and son-in-law: Elyse, my wife; Kate and Oscar, my daughter and son-in-law. Their kindness, their idealism, their devotion to helping others is always an inspiration to me. And having them in my life is certainly the most important thing I could ever hope for. I wish my parents were here today, but it would be a little greedy because they would be 110 years old. But besides giving me all the love any child or individual could want, they taught me the importance of social justice, and not by pounding it into my head but just by the way they lived their lives and what they said. I have had so many opportunities in my life to work for social justice. When I was in college, I was involved in lots of political campaigns. Out of law school, I was fortunate to get the opportunity to work at the Western Center on Law & Poverty, where I worked on issues related to educational rights of handicapped children. After that, I had the incredible opportunity to serve as the lead staff person at that Bet Tzedek. At that time, we were a small organization. It has grown to be one of the foremost providers of legal services in the country. And Bet Tzedek, I had the opportunity to work on behalf of tenants, protect tenant rights, Holocaust survivors who were denied their benefits, seniors who were overlooked and forgotten. Then the people of Los Angeles had the judgment or the misjudgment to elect me to the state Assembly. I got to meet this guy over here, a member of the council, Tom Umberg, one of my heroes. And in the Assembly, I had the opportunity to work on behalf of those who were disadvantaged. Got to work to pass legislation on gay rights. And Justice Bedsworth, your leadership on that issue was something that was important to the effort we made in the Legislature on employment equality. I salute you for that. And then after serving in the Legislature for four terms, I really made it. I got the job my parents always dreamed of for me. I became a judge and had the good fortune of being assigned to the juvenile court in Los Angeles. I was actually advised to go there by the dear former justice Paul Boland, who I know many of you know and loved, as I did. Paul told me that was the place for me. And he was right. At the juvenile court, I had the good fortune of working with Mike Nash, who was the presiding judge for nearly a decade in Los Angeles and continues to work on those issues. So, I have been so fortunate that that admonition from my parents to strive to achieve for justice and work for social justice has been something I have had the opportunity to reach in my life. But I have to tell you, of all those activities, the highlight was being here in this room as a member of the Judicial Council because this is the group that is most responsible for achieving and ensuring access to justice for all in our state. Not the only ones. Clearly, it takes many people in all sorts of walks of life, but none are as important as the work of the Judicial Council. It is sad that we all know many people of political stripes in our country today question democracy and question our nation's commitment to democracy. And I know we have three branches in our system, but it is my belief that the judicial branch is the one that is most important to maintaining and preserving our democracy because it is in the judicial branch that more members of the public encounter are government and our democracy. We heard the words earlier about the new juror instructions and all the jurors who spent time in the court system, and individuals who are parties in the court system. This is where the average Californian and

average American encounters their government and their democracy. So, assuring their access to the court system is the absolute most important thing that we can do. So, I am back to where I started, to thank the council and the Chief Justice for this award. It does mean the world to me, and I wish you all the strength and the courage to continue doing the work that you do to maintain and advance access to justice in the state to help preserve the independence of a free judiciary without political pressure based upon the merits of disputes, and this is why my service and my receipt of this award means so much to me, as it does I know to my fellow honorees, who I am especially honored to be with today, Justice Bedsworth and Melissa Fowler-Bradley. I am thrilled to be part of the record of this award at the same time as each of you. So, thank you all so very much. [ Applause ]

>> Such special honorees today. And another special honoree is Melissa Fowler-Bradley, our third and final honoree. Truly epitomizes all that is good about the branch. Melissa has worked in all facets of the courts for about 50 years.

>> Don't do the math, please.

>> I have had the great pleasure of serving alongside her on the Court Facilities Advisory Committee for 12 years and have witnessed her dedication firsthand. Everything Melissa does, she does well. And you would think whenever you are working with her on a project that that's the only thing she is working on, and she has a myriad of projects going on at any time, you know? On top of everything else she's one of those people that, a number of people across the state have you on speed dial. You are constantly helping out folks in various counties, giving advice to people in various counties while at the same time we are meeting together, there's a 1,000-page report with thousands of exhibits and you are asking a question about page 798. You know? We have dealt with billions of dollars on the Court Facilities Advisory Committee, and having someone like Melissa Fowler-Bradley sitting at the table with her keen understanding not only of people but of projects and process: it has been invaluable. You have meant the world to the Court Facilities Advisory Committee and every other advisory committee that you have been on. You have been a miracle worker on any number of committees. When you watch Melissa work and interact with people, you see someone who is incredibly kind and thoughtful, but also somebody who believes that those in public service have a duty to get it right, to put in the time, to make the effort, and that is you, Melissa. You have done so much for our branch year in and year out, as well as all the members of your court, who sing your praises every day, so that you help us across the state. But you have been a remarkable CEO in Shasta. And I tell you, I must say from Steve Jahr and every PJ sense I have heard so many wonderful things about you as all of us have heard around this table and you are so deserving of this award. As you will see in this wonderful video that is coming up, you are a representative of our branch that, we wish we could clone you and send you everywhere around the state because you are the epitome of a great CEO and a great representative of our branch. Here is the video. ♪

>> I came to know Melissa first when we hired her during the time I was PJ. Her skill and her approach to customer service really shown through from the point she arrived until the present.

She also successfully digitized all of the closed files in our court—just one of many innovative projects that she was responsible for that improved court service, improved access to justice, and saved money all at the same time.

>> She has developed several things that have helped specific problems we have had with regard to failure-to-appear issues on criminal cases. She helped obtain a grant that was able to use technology to try to get people to get reminders on how to get to court on time. She has been able to identify issues with the failure-to-pay system, so she was able to get a grant and work on a group that helped with the technology upgraded to do that. I know she has worked on several committees throughout the years. And what has been very revealing to me when I tried to do things with her is the respect that she gets on a statewide level as well as taking lessons we have learned on a local level and giving that information to others as well. What makes her different is I think she thinks of not only our court but also the branch as a child. She really doesn't seem to care about the branch and our court so much that she is constantly thinking about a way to improve her relationship with the court, how the branch can improve, and how access to justice can be better.

>> She epitomizes public service for me. She is humble, she is hard-working, she considers it a calling. She considers it a privilege to be able to serve the public. Very, very impressive person who never tries to grab the limelight. She is in the trenches, doing the work every day, working on committees that sometimes aren't terribly sexy, but they are important. She is a remarkable person.

>> So, because she is viewing problems and problem-solving through the eyes of the court user, her focuses have been, how do I better light the path? That sort of selfless approach is something her staff members pick up on. They see it. They see she is putting others first, and that becomes infectious. She is an exemplar for the kind of character you want to have in a public servant: somebody who is industrious, selfless, demonstrates fine character and is looking out for the needs of others.

>> She is an ideal that many, many employees of the courts, judges, other court executive officers and staff should strive to be. [ Applause ]

>> Now to present the award to Melissa, Judge Tamara Wood, and Judge Adam Ryan.

>> Thank you, Justice Hill, Chief Justice, members of the Judicial Council. I am here today as the assistant presiding judge from the Shasta County superior court and copresenting with my presiding judge, Judge Adam Ryan. But I want to stress to everyone that this nomination of Melissa for this award was unanimous by our entire bench. And I know every one of my colleagues would love to be here today to support her in this recognition, but somebody had to hold down the fort. And so, I just want to express my appreciation to those members of our bench who couldn't be here today who are at work and want everyone to know this was a unanimous nomination by our bench. You know, early this week I sat down at my keyboard,



and I thought, I have 2 to 3 minutes to speak and, somehow, adequately express this amazing person and the work she has done over 50 years. I was feeling a little overwhelmed. Sometimes, the universe, though, will give you a symbol or sign. That's what happened to me. As I started to type and put my thoughts into words, I looked down at my wrist and I had this bangle on. And this is a gift that Melissa gave me when I was a brand-new judge. I had a conversation with her about whether or not I was adequate for the worthy endeavor that I was going into, being a trial court judge, recognizing the weight and importance of what we do in our jobs, and I was expressing to her how I was feeling that weight. I came to work a few days later and I had this gift on my desk with this amazing card that had all these supportive things to say. And this bangle says, she believed she could, so she did. And I wear it every single day. The words are almost worn off now because it has been 10 years. But this was my symbol, when I started to write, about Melissa, because Melissa is about supporting others and instilling confidence in others. And it is never about her. And everyone that works around her will tell you we are all better at our jobs because of that support and confidence she instills in us. So, keeping this bangle in mind, I will try to tell you in a couple minutes just a summary or an overview of the amazing things she has done. This year, 2024 marks Melissa Fowler Bradley's 50th year in public service. Sorry, I did the math. And as one of my colleagues said in his nomination, it is the quality of that service, not its remarkable duration, that characterizes the value of her contributions to our judicial branch of government. In 1974, she was first employed by the Alameda County Welfare Department. In 1977, she moved to the Alameda County superior court, where she served as a courtroom clerk, supervising clerk, and division chief. In 1995, she became the assistant court executive officer for the Shasta County Superior Court, and in 2008 she was unanimously appointed as Court Executive Officer clerk of the court, the position she still holds. She is a selfless, generous, strong, and visionary leader of the Shasta County superior court. I could have written 10 pages of examples of Ms. Fowler Bradley's work or leadership efforts, which have benefited our court, the community, and the judicial branch during her years of service. But I kept in mind I had 2 to 3 minutes. These efforts on her part include big projects such as working to bring a new courthouse to our community. And the projects she has worked on are diverse, and obviously, a new courthouse is a very large project, but I will also tell you about the time I returned to work after a weekend and noticed that the judges' parking lot had new lines painted for the parking spaces. She did that work herself. She came in on the weekend, and she painted the lines in our judges' parking lot because this was during a time at our old courthouse when we did not have a budget to have the work done. But it needed to be done. And she did it herself. It truly is difficult to express the depth of her work ethic and leadership she exemplifies on a daily basis. I will simply conclude my comments by stating she is a tireless advocate for justice whose commitment has improved the judicial branch of the state of California at the local and statewide level. I will turn it over to our presiding judge.

>> Good morning, Justice, members of the council. I want to reiterate a couple things I know Justice Hill hit on as well. Amongst all the great CEOs we have in this state, I believe Melissa Fowler-Bradley is among the top of that group. That's because she is the epitome of a great public servant. She is humble. She has integrity. And she has dedication to what she does

because, as I said in the video, she really loves the branch. And as Judge Wood just mentioned a few minutes ago, everybody she works with—whether it be an administrator, a judge, or court employee—I truly feel ends up being better at their job after they work with her. It is certainly my honor, and Judge Wood, as well, her honor as well, to present this award to Melissa Fowler–Bradley. [ Applause ]

>> So, thank you so much, Chief Justice and Shelley and members of the Judicial Council. This is a tremendous honor and a day I will never forget. However, if I had had one request for today, it would be that I got to go first. Because it is extremely hard to follow Justice Bedsworth and Judge Friedman. I do have a number of people I would like to thank, starting with my actual family, of course, and also my work family in Shasta superior court. I am very, very fortunate in that I have the pleasure of working with an exceptional bench that I consider to be the best bosses any CEO could have, and they are also my good friends. One of them has joined your ranks, of course, Judge Tammy Wood. And others who are not—who are also here today, you met our presiding judge, Adam Ryan, and also Judge Stephen Baker is here, as well. Honestly, I didn't authorize any of these people. I don't know what is happening back at home. But they're here, and I am thankful that they are. They were the driving force in nominating me for this award little did I know (I'm looking at you, Judge Wood), and I know they enlisted many others, including retired Judge Stephen Jahr. Judge Jahr is also here today. He is a former presiding judge in Shasta, and a former Administrative Director of the Judicial Council. Judge Jahr has done it all, and he is also a former recipient of this award. I would also like to thank another council member, Justice Brad Hill, who was instrumental in making Shasta's new courthouse a reality. Thank you, Justice Hill. Your commitment in building projects like the Shasta has improved access to justice in our community and made it possible for the court to provide better service to the public in a structure that is welcoming to everyone. It is gratifying to see local enthusiasm in the court, and a desire to learn what courts do and how we do it. In addition to groups requesting tours, we regularly receive requests to conduct school field trips for children at all grade levels. Sadly, the kids rarely ask to meet the court administrator. They always ask to meet a judge, and all of our bench officers enjoy participating in that. You have given me a lot of credit here, today, but I want you to know there are 200 court employees back home that make me look good on a regular basis, and I owe them a huge debt of gratitude. I am thankful to them. I am thankful for you and all that you contribute to make the judicial branch a place where people want to spend lifelong careers. I have been so privileged. Thank you very much. [ Applause ]

>> Well, today, we celebrated three individuals whose dedication to justice has made a lasting impact on California's judicial system. Thank you, Justice Bedsworth, Judge Friedman, Melissa Fowler-Bradley, and thank all of you for coming and joining us. Chief, this concludes the 2024 Distinguished Service Awards. It has been a special day celebrating very special people.

>> Thank you. Thank you, Justice Hill. Thank you, again, to each of you. You are amazing, remarkable people. We will be able to thank you individually later. We appreciate you being here, as well as your family and friends. Thank you. One more round of applause. [ Applause ]

Okay. Now as a final item, I will refer you to written reports we have for various of our internal committee chairs. And that concludes the business meeting. We do have our next meeting scheduled for February 20th and 21st. So, happy holidays to all of you. And the meeting is adjourned. Thank you. [Event Concluded]