

Judicial Council of California

455 Golden Gate Avenue · San Francisco, California 94102-3688

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 26-003

For business meeting on July 17, 2026

Administrative Director's Report

Judicial Council Report Details

Submitted by

Michelle Curran, Administrative Director
Judicial Council

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Contact

Tina Carroll, 415-865-4242

tina.carroll@jud.ca.gov

Executive Summary

The following information outlines several of the many activities undertaken by staff to advance the Judicial Council's strategic goals and priorities for the judicial branch. The report highlights actions taken since the council's meeting on April 24, 2026, and excludes items on the July business meeting agenda.

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Activities

Judicial Branch Budget

Judicial Council staff participated in budget discussions and provided information to the Department of Finance and legislative staff throughout the period leading up to enactment of the Budget Act of 2026. A memorandum detailing the judicial branch's fiscal year 2026–27 budget was distributed and statewide conference calls were held with court leadership to share updates and answer questions.

Judicial Branch Celebration of America's 250th Anniversary

The Judicial Council produced two educational videos highlighting the importance of justice and the rule of law as embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the United States and California Constitutions: [Justice 250: Know Your Constitutional Rights | California Courts Newsroom](#).

Law Day and Power of Democracy Initiative

Law Day (May 1) was celebrated with the announcement of the 2026 Civic Learning Awards, co-sponsored by the Chief Justice and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. These awards are the state's highest recognition of K–12 schools for outstanding achievement in civic education. As part of the Power of Democracy initiative, Chief Justice Guerrero welcomed educators, students, parents, and judges to the Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District in Sacramento, where students delivered speeches on the importance of the rule of law and its role in our democracy.

Court Facilities

- Courthouse dedications were held for the Superior Courts of [Sacramento](#), [San Bernardino](#), and [Sonoma](#) Counties.
- For fiscal year 2025–26, 1,669 facility modification projects were approved with a total project cost of \$96.2 million. Since the last council meeting in April, 35 real estate transactions were completed, including lease and license amendments, terminations, and intrabranh agreements in eight counties.

Court Reporter Dashboard

The [Court Reporter Dashboard](#) was updated with data from the final two quarters of 2025 and the first quarter of 2026. Key data points include:

- As of 2026, California employed 1,101 court reporters. To meet the demands of the current caseload, California courts need an additional 458 full-time court reporters.
- From January 1, 2023, to March 31, 2026, courts hired 381.8 full-time reporters, 183.5 of whom were voice writers (48.1 percent of all hires).
- During the same period, 366.3 court reporters left their positions.

Labor and Employee Relations

Labor negotiations assistance was provided to 21 trial courts, including side-letter negotiations, impact bargaining, and successor memorandum-of-understanding negotiations. Additional support was provided on 27 labor and employee matters.

Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act

As of May 31, 2026, 5,106 CARE Act petitions had been filed with the trial courts. Court site visits were conducted at the Superior Courts of Monterey, Santa Clara, and Yolo Counties with state and local partners including representatives from the California Health and Human Services Agency and local behavioral health agencies. Participants observed CARE Act proceedings and visited local housing facilities to inform legislative efforts and allow council staff to provide more targeted technical assistance to courts.

Family Court Services Mediation

Twenty-five Family Court Services departments participated in the 2026 statewide mediation outcomes survey. The survey responses will be used to analyze how mediation outcomes vary based on factors such as representation, domestic violence, substance abuse, and child abuse allegations, culminating in a final public report in December 2026.

Judicial Resources and Technical Assistance Program

Juvenile case file reviews were conducted at 12 superior courts (Calaveras, Lake, Los Angeles, Mendocino, Napa, Orange, Plumas, San Benito, San Bernardino, Sutter, Trinity, and Yolo Counties) to identify any legal issues and training needs. Reviews are conducted for all trial courts on a rotating basis.

National Criminal History Improvement Program

As part of ongoing efforts to improve criminal history reporting and data quality, Judicial Council staff collaborated with the California Department of Justice and the Superior Court of Yuba County to review case disposition records. Lessons learned will inform the final program report.

Judicial Branch Public Service Career Paths

Ten graduate participants completed their 10-month Judicial Fellowship Program assignments with eight superior courts and Judicial Council offices under the mentorship of court executive officers or professional staff. The program—co-sponsored by the Judicial Council and Sacramento State University’s Center for California Studies—started in 1997. Participants engage in field and academic seminars and work full time in a variety of substantive policy and committee assignments. Additionally, two Shapiro Administration of Justice interns began summer internships with the Judicial Council’s Research, Data, and Analytics and Governmental Affairs offices.

Judicial Branch Education

More than 45 education programs and resource tools were created, updated, or delivered for judicial officers, court personnel, and justice system partners. These included:

- Training programs such as the Appellate Judicial Attorney Institute, criminal and juvenile law institutes, Racial Justice Act implementation, trial skills training for dependency lawyers, and 12 fiscal year-end training sessions for trial courts.
- Distance education programs addressing legal updates on civil law, criminal law, family law, and juvenile justice; webinars on pretrial release and detention practices; and implications of the California Supreme Court’s 2026 decision in *In re Kowalczyk*.
- Publication updates including a benchbook addressing civil proceedings and a restitution benchguide.

Domestic and International Visitors Programs

A delegation of provincial supreme court justices from Argentina met with Judicial Council and Supreme Court staff to discuss the structure and function of the Judicial Council and California’s court system.

Advisory Bodies

Advisory Body Meetings

The following [advisory bodies](#) convened since the April 2026 business meeting:

1. Advisory Committee on Audits and Financial Accountability for the Judicial Branch
2. Advisory Committee on Criminal Jury Instructions
3. Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness
4. Artificial Intelligence Task Force
5. Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee
6. Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee
7. Court Facilities Advisory Committee
8. Court Interpreters Advisory Panel
9. Court Security Advisory Committee
10. Criminal Law Advisory Committee
11. Data Analytics Advisory Committee
12. Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee
13. Information Technology Advisory Committee
14. Joint Trial Court Presiding Judges and Court Executives Advisory Committees
15. Judicial Branch Workers’ Compensation Program Advisory Committee
16. Probate and Mental Health Advisory Committee
17. Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee
18. Traffic Advisory Committee
19. Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee
20. Trial Court Facility Modification Advisory Committee
21. Tribal Court–State Court Forum

Meeting Details

Advisory Committee on Audits and Financial Accountability for the Judicial Branch

- Approved the public [invitation to comment](#) for proposed revisions to the *Judicial Branch Contracting Manual* to increase the threshold below which a competitively bid procurement is not required, so that the manual will remain substantially similar to the *State Contracting Manual* and *State Administrative Manual*, as required by the Judicial Branch Contract Law.
- Approved Audit Services' fiscal year 2026–27 audit plan, which includes initiating seven trial court audits.
- Approved audit reports for the Superior Courts of [Lassen](#) and [Modoc](#) Counties.

Advisory Committee on Criminal Jury Instructions

- Considered 19 proposals related to criminal jury instructions.
- Reviewed public comments on proposed revisions to 27 instructions and two new instructions.

Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness

- *Racial Justice Subcommittee*: Discussed upcoming webinar to orient and educate court staff on resources available in relation to the Racial Justice Act.
- *Language Access Subcommittee*: Reviewed feedback on proposed revisions to the bench card *Appointing and Working with Court Interpreters* and subsequently approved the revisions.

Artificial Intelligence Task Force

- Discussed questions concerning the ethical use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) by judicial officers and examined AI-generated hallucinations and judicial response options.

Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee

- Reviewed public comments on proposals to amend rules of court and revise Judicial Council forms in areas including court-ordered mediation, mandatory settlement conferences, unlawful detainer, fee waivers, military service, service of summons, and protective orders.

Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee

- Discussed the annual agenda, received updates from subcommittees, and reviewed pending legislation.
- *Mental Health Subcommittee*: Reviewed progress on current projects and considered future work related to resources addressing incompetence to stand trial.
- *Racial Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittee*: Discussed future projects supporting equitable access, services, and outcomes in treatment courts.

Court Facilities Advisory Committee

- Approved the following for submission to the Judicial Council: courthouse naming proposals for the new Sixth Appellate District Courthouse in Sunnyvale and the new Mendocino Courthouse in Ukiah, the draft *Judicial Branch Five-Year Infrastructure Plan for Fiscal Year 2027–28*, and five 2027–28 capital outlay budget change proposals.

Court Interpreters Advisory Panel

- Reviewed potential changes to the court interpreter certification process aimed at strengthening the interpreter workforce and improving candidate success. Topics included a two-year carryover score policy for candidates who pass portions of the Bilingual Interpreting Examination, a one-time retroactive application of the policy, and potential candidate orientation and language proficiency screening requirements prior to examination eligibility.

Court Security Advisory Committee

- Reviewed and approved proposed projects for the Security Systems Program to maintain or replace electronic security equipment and systems in trial courts.

Criminal Law Advisory Committee

- Reviewed public comments on proposals to amend felony sentencing rules and revise pretrial release and detention forms and discussed pending legislation affecting criminal proceedings.
- *Joint Subcommittee on Mental Health Legislation*: Reviewed pending legislation affecting collaborative justice courts and criminal proceedings.
- *Pretrial Policy and Data Subcommittee*: Considered revisions to draft pretrial release and detention rules following the California Supreme Court's decision, *In re Kowalczyk*.

Data Analytics Advisory Committee

- Worked on finalizing various components of the Judicial Workload Study, including updated caseweights and other model parameters used to measure statewide judicial need.
- Received an update on the statewide data warehouse pilot program.
- Reviewed the preliminary dashboard for reporting civil arrests in court facilities.
- Discussed the Resource Assessment Study supplemental review.

Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee

- Allocated juvenile law fiscal year 2026–27 funding for Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Local Assistance.
- Reviewed 16 post-comment rules and forms proposals from the spring 2026 invitation-to-comment cycle.
- Received the 2026 Access to Visitation Grant Program report, summarizing grantee activities and Judicial Council efforts to strengthen supervised visitation services statewide.
- Discussed development of testing scenarios with the Guideline Calculator Certification Workgroup.

Information Technology Advisory Committee

- Approved proposed grant awards for the fiscal year 2026–27 Language Access Signage and Technology Grant Program, Cycle 8.
- Approved the IT Modernization Workstream's completion of fiscal year 2026–27 court project evaluations.
- Approved an update to the 2026 annual agenda to advance the Frameworks for Effective Technology Adoption Workstream.

- Sunset the fiscal year 2025–26 IT Modernization Workstream.
- Considered approval of the final Remote Proceedings Technology Recommendations developed by the Hybrid Courtroom Phase 2 Workstream, which contains actionable guidance on equipment selection, best practices, and implementation details necessary to meet and exceed minimum standards.

Joint Trial Court Presiding Judges and Court Executives Advisory Committees

- *Caseflow Management Subcommittee*: Reviewed the National Center for State Courts self-assessment tool and recommendations and findings to finalize subcommittee work.

Judicial Branch Workers’ Compensation Program Advisory Committee

- Approved the fiscal year 2026–27 premium allocation for the Judicial Branch Workers’ Compensation Program, along with a one-year extension of the clinical consultation pilot program.

Probate and Mental Health Advisory Committee

- Reviewed spring 2026 post-comment proposals, including revisions to fee waiver forms and new probate rules and forms addressing joint guardianship appointments and implementation of Assembly Bill 747, the Service of Process Accountability, Reform and Equity (SPARE) Act.
- Reviewed Legislative Subcommittee proposals related to guardianships, conservatorships, the CARE Act, and criminal competency.

Shriver Civil Counsel Act Implementation Committee

- Recommended the selection for project funding for the 2026–29 grant cycle.

Traffic Advisory Committee

- Reviewed public comments on proposed revisions to the Trial by Written Declaration forms, including *Instructions to Defendant*, *Request for Trial by Written Declaration*, *Notice and Instructions to Arresting Officer*, and *Order and Notice to Defendant of New Trial*.
- Received a presentation from the California Highway Patrol regarding new technology intended to improve roadway safety.

Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee

- Approved fiscal year 2026–27 allocations of \$3.2 billion from the Trial Court Trust Fund and General Fund to support trial court operations.
- Approved fiscal year 2026–27 State Trial Court Improvement and Modernization Fund allocations of \$47 million to support various trial court programs and activities.
- Approved fiscal year 2026–27 court-appointed juvenile dependency counsel allocations of \$186.7 million.
- Received an informational update on the annual report for the Funds Held on Behalf of the Trial Courts program for open projects and those completed in fiscal year 2024–25. This program provides flexibility to courts for managing operational budgets and funding critical one-time projects.

Trial Court Facility Modification Advisory Committee

- Authorized expenditures of \$14,380,623 for court facility modifications and an additional \$507,971 for security-related projects.
- Approved the fiscal year 2025–26 program budget actions.
- Approved the draft *Trial Court Facility Modifications Report* for quarter three of fiscal year 2025–26.
- Received updates on court-funded requests, facilities maintenance performance, equipment facility condition assessments, the Trial Court Real Estate Portfolio and the Expense and Revenue Report, analysis of uninterruptible power supply systems versus generators, preventative maintenance spotlight projects, deferred maintenance project status, and the status of the Court Facility Architectural Revolving Fund projects.

Tribal Court–State Court Forum

- Participated in the Tribal Advisory Committee and Tribal Consultation meeting convened by the California Department of Social Services.
- Received updates about ad hoc work groups and current projects at the Center for Indigenous Law and Justice.

Judicial Council Staffing Metrics

Staffing Metrics Summary as of June 30, 2026

Staffing	Judicial Council
Authorized Positions	1002.00
Filled Authorized Positions	808.10
Headcount—Employees	809.00
Vacancies	193.90
Vacancy Rate	19.35%
Judicial Council Temporary Employees	21.00
Employment Agency Temporary Workers	10.00
Contractors	42.60
Total Workforce	881.70

The full [Judicial Council staffing metrics report](#) is updated on a monthly basis and posted to the California Courts public website.

Judicial Appointments and Vacancies

The Governor made 29 new appointments since the April report:

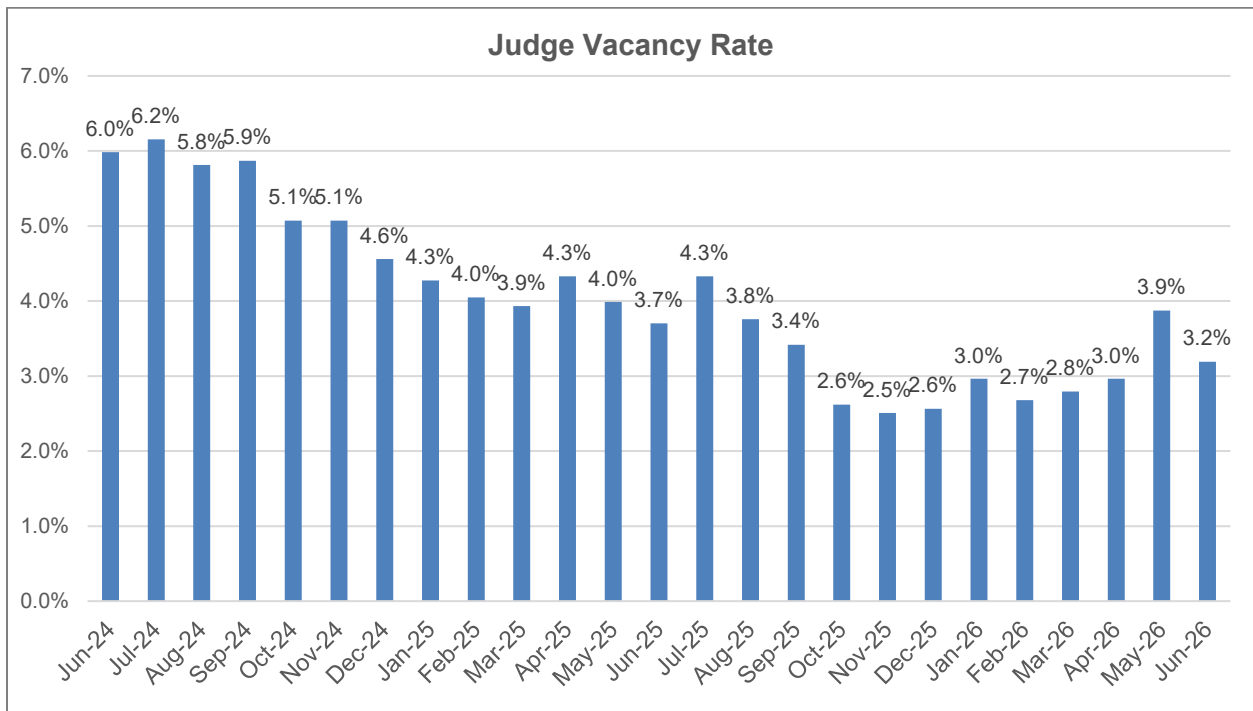
- Courts of Appeal: Second District (2), Fifth District (1), Sixth District (1)
- Superior courts: Contra Costa (2), El Dorado (1), Los Angeles (8), Monterey (1), Napa (1), Orange (2), San Diego (3), Santa Barbara (1), Santa Clara (3), Stanislaus (1), Tuolumne (1), Ventura (1)

Summary of the Number of Judgeships Authorized, Filled, and Vacant as of July 1, 2026

Type of Court	Number of Courts	Authorized	Filled	Vacant	Filled (Last Month)	Vacant (Last Month)
Supreme Court	1	7	6	1	6	1
Courts of Appeal	6	106	99	7	99	7
Superior Courts	58	1,755	1,699	56	1,689	66
All Courts	65	1,868	1,804	64	1,794	74

The full [Judicial Vacancy Report](#) is updated on a monthly basis and posted to the California Courts public website.

Percentage of Superior Court Judgeships Vacant: June 2024–June 2026



Number of Judgeships Authorized, Filled, and Vacant: June 2024–June 2026

Superior Courts					Courts of Appeal			
Month	Authorized	Filled	Vacancy	Vacancy Rate	Authorized	Filled	Vacancy	Vacancy Rate
Jun-24	1,755	1,650	105	6.0%	106	101	5	4.7%
Jul-24	1,755	1,647	108	6.2%	106	100	6	5.7%
Aug-24	1,755	1,653	102	5.8%	106	100	6	5.7%
Sep-24	1,755	1,652	103	5.9%	106	101	5	4.7%
Oct-24	1,755	1,666	89	5.1%	106	99	7	6.6%
Nov-24	1,755	1,666	89	5.1%	106	100	6	5.7%
Dec-24	1,755	1,675	80	4.6%	106	100	6	5.7%
Jan-25	1,755	1,680	75	4.3%	106	99	7	6.6%
Feb-25	1,755	1,684	71	4.0%	106	100	6	5.7%
Mar-25	1,755	1,686	69	3.9%	106	99	7	6.6%
Apr-25	1,755	1,679	76	4.3%	106	98	8	7.5%
May-25	1,755	1,685	70	4.0%	106	98	8	7.5%
Jun-25	1,756	1,690	65	3.7%	106	97	9	8.5%
Jul-25	1,756	1,680	76	4.3%	106	96	10	9.4%
Aug-25	1,756	1,690	66	3.8%	106	99	7	6.6%
Sep-25	1,756	1,686	60	3.4%	106	98	8	7.5%
Oct-25	1,756	1,710	46	2.6%	106	98	8	7.5%
Nov-25	1,755	1,711	44	2.5%	106	98	8	7.5%
Dec-25	1,755	1,710	45	2.6%	106	98	8	7.5%
Jan-26	1,755	1,703	52	3.0%	106	97	9	8.5%
Feb-26	1,755	1,708	47	2.7%	106	96	10	9.4%
Mar-26	1,755	1,706	49	2.8%	106	98	8	7.5%
Apr-26	1,755	1,703	52	3.0%	106	98	8	7.5%
May-26	1,755	1,687	68	3.9%	106	101	5	4.7%
Jun-26	1,755	1,699	56	3.2%	106	99	7	6.6%