



Judicial Council of California

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 26-030

For business meeting on February 20, 2026

Title

Equal Access Fund: Distribution of Funds for Equal Access Fund Program

Report Type

Action Required

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

None

Effective Date

February 20, 2026

Recommended by

State Bar Legal Services Trust Fund

Commission

Amin Al-Sarraf, Cochair

Erica Connolly, Cochair

Date of Report

January 14, 2026

Contact

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Executive Summary

The Legal Services Trust Fund Commission recommends that the Judicial Council approve a one-time General Fund distribution of \$100,000 to the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission of the State Bar of California for the Equal Access Fund program, as authorized by Assembly Bill 170 (Stats. 2024, ch. 51). The commission will distribute the funds to qualified legal services providers and support centers to improve equal access and the fair administration of justice.

Recommendation

The Legal Services Trust Fund Commission recommends that the Judicial Council, effective February 20, 2026, approve the distribution of \$100,000 to the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission of the State Bar of California for the Equal Access Fund program.

Relevant Previous Council Action

On October 24, 2025, the Judicial Council approved allocation of \$40,487,700 to the State Bar of California for the Equal Access Fund IOLTA (Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts) Formula Grants and Partnership Grants as authorized by the Budget Act of 2025 (Stats. 2025, ch. 4).¹

Analysis/Rationale

Annually since 1999, the Budget Act has appropriated funds for the Equal Access Fund and directed the Judicial Council to distribute them through the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission to qualified legal services providers and support centers to improve equal access and the fair administration of justice. Assembly Bill 170 appropriated a one-time General Fund allocation of \$100,000 to the Judicial Council for distribution for the Equal Access Fund program (Link A).

Policy implications

The recommendation supports Goal I of The Strategic Plan for California's Judicial Branch—Access, Fairness, Diversity, and Inclusion—by increasing representation for low-income persons and services to self-represented litigants and by ensuring equal access to the courts, court proceedings, and programs.

Comments

Public comments were not solicited for this proposal because the recommendation is within the Judicial Council's purview to approve without circulation.

Alternatives considered

No alternatives were considered because the funding is allocated as directed by Assembly Bill 170.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

The recommendation in this report will have no direct fiscal effect on the courts. Judicial Council staff will work with the staff of the commission to oversee administration of the funds, data collection, and reporting. Staff will also provide support to the commission to facilitate administration of the funds.

Attachments and Links

1. Link A: Assem. Bill 170 (Stats. 2024, ch. 51), [leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB170](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB170)

¹ Judicial Council of Cal., *Equal Access Fund: Distribution of Funds for IOLTA-Formula Grants and Partnership Grants* (Oct. 3, 2025), jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=14843438&GUID=F2B6AFCB-324B-4DE3-99F6-AD88FB73F475.