



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Court Announces Further Cuts in Services

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. – The Superior Court of San Mateo County today announced further reduction in staff and court services due to the ongoing State budget cuts to the trial courts. These reductions include: eliminating five court commissioner positions and 16 to 21 staff positions, closure of five courtrooms and suspending the majority of court services in the South San Francisco and San Mateo branches. Two Judges will remain at the South San Francisco branch to conduct preliminary hearings.

Absent State restoration of essential trial court funding, the reduction of commissioners and related consolidation efforts will likely occur as soon as July 2013. Remaining workforce reductions will likely occur in September 2013. Presiding Judge Robert D Foiles and Court Executive Officer John Fitton have shared this information personally with their commissioners and court employees in recent weeks.

Trial courts throughout California have suffered unprecedented State budget cuts of more than \$1 billion over the past five years. The San Mateo Superior Court has seen a dramatic reduction in its budget as a result of these State cuts to the judicial branch and unfunded cost increases. Going forward, the court must absorb additional budget cuts that will have a significant impact for years to come.

“None of these reductions are actions that our court wants to take. In fact, Judge Freeman (the prior Presiding Judge), John Fitton and I have worked successfully with our employees to delay them as long as possible” said Judge Foiles.

In September 2012, court officials publicly announced the likelihood of these actions if the Governor and State Leaders failed to eliminate the latest court cuts. “We have purposefully shared this information well in advance and worked with our justice partners, legislators and community leaders to seek restoration of court funding and minimize these actions, if at all possible,” said Judge Foiles.

Cuts to the trial courts by the Legislature and Governor have already resulted in significant court service reductions. To date, the San Mateo Superior Court has reduced its workforce by more than 30 percent, reduced clerk’s office and phone hours, consolidated traffic and small claims clerk’s offices, traffic arraignments, family law hearings and the complex litigation court to Redwood City. In February, the court will further reduce its public counter and phone hours.

Judge Foiles said it is “extremely disappointing” that the Governor’s January proposed budget fails to restore vital funding to the trial courts. “We must plan now to effectively prioritize the most essential court services to protect the public while also living within our means. We regret that this will mean further delays in many other areas” he added.

Court officials say they remain committed to prioritizing public safety, fully utilizing technology and creating efficiencies to provide the best trial court services possible for San Mateo residents within the limits of their severely reduced funding. The vast majority of judiciary, staff and court resources will be consolidated in Redwood City to respond to the most essential court services.

“Trial courts throughout the State have already been cut disproportionately. We believe these cuts do not serve Californians or our communities well. They are wrong,” said Mr. Fitton. “Trial courts protect the public – public rights, public freedom and public safety. We have seen many other courts already forced to close courtrooms and branches and severely limit their services. We have successfully delayed these severe actions as long as possible, sustaining important court services for our community - but we will not be able to avoid these added actions absent immediate restoration of essential court funding.”

Judge Foiles added, “We are working collaboratively with our justice partners and telling State leaders that the protection of the public’s rights, freedom and safety should not be at risk – we need essential court funding restored.”

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