

Dear Members of the Legal Community:

The Governor and the leaders of the State Legislature have finally reached a compromise on the amended FY 2009-2010 budget, and drastic funding reductions to the judicial branch are now about to be finalized. The budget package voted on in the Legislature includes approximately \$400 million in cuts to court funding. Included with the budget package is trailer legislation by the state Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The AOC bill provides assistance to the trial courts to help offset the impact of the huge reductions we must bear. However, our Court must still implement major reductions in spending in order to continue operations.

As part of our plan to address this crisis, the Santa Barbara Superior Court has determined to institute 12 days of unpaid furlough for all staff this fiscal year. These days will include the 10 court closure days that are part of the AOC bill in the budget package. The Court will be completely closed to the public on the 10 court closure days, which are the third Wednesday in each month, beginning September 2009 through June 2010. In addition, we will have two other non-closure, furlough days with limited operations: Friday August 21, 2009, and Thursday December 24, 2009.

On August 21 and December 24, the Court will operate with a “skeleton” crew. There will be a clerk's office open north and south, and courtrooms staffed to conduct only absolutely essential proceedings such as criminal arraignments and juvenile detention hearings. Employees working on August 21 and December 24 will then furlough on alternate dates to be selected with their supervisors.

With the adoption of the AOC court closure plan, the Santa Barbara Superior Court furlough days will be as follows:

- |     |           |                    |                     |
|-----|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1.  | Friday    | August 21, 2009    | limited proceedings |
| 2.  | Wednesday | September 16, 2009 | court closure       |
| 3.  | Wednesday | October 21, 2009   | court closure       |
| 4.  | Wednesday | November 18, 2009  | court closure       |
| 5.  | Wednesday | December 16, 2009  | court closure       |
| 6.  | Thursday  | December 24, 2009  | limited proceedings |
| 7.  | Wednesday | January 20, 2010   | court closure       |
| 8.  | Wednesday | February 17, 2010  | court closure       |
| 9.  | Wednesday | March 17, 2010     | court closure       |
| 10. | Wednesday | April 21, 2010     | court closure       |
| 11. | Wednesday | May 19, 2010       | court closure       |
| 12. | Wednesday | June 16, 2010      | court closure       |

If for any reason the AOC court closure plan is not put in place, the Court will then replace the 10 Wednesdays with 10 additional limited-proceedings days, generally on Fridays, to be handled the same as August 21 and December 24.

In addition to these furloughs, the Court's plan also includes but is not limited to a general hiring freeze; elimination of almost all extra and temporary help; reduction of overtime, travel and training; and efforts to enhance local revenues and fees where possible. We will have to continue to take all these and other steps to meet our obligations to the public while remaining fiscally responsible during these difficult times.

Our Court is staffed by dedicated public servants who are greatly appreciated by the legal community we serve. The Court's intent is to continue to seek to protect jobs while at the same time responsibly addressing the reality of our dramatic funding reduction.

The entire bench joins me in sincerely thanking you for your patience and your understanding during these times of necessary shared sacrifice.

Gary M. Blair  
Superior Court Executive Officer