



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

Assembly hearing spotlights court funding crisis

Former CAOC President McCarthy testifies on consumer impact

SACRAMENTO (Feb. 12, 2013) – Access to justice for California families was the topic today at an informational hearing held by the Assembly Judiciary Committee at the State Capitol in Sacramento. The hearing was prompted by an ongoing funding crisis for the state’s court system that has led to the closure of 46 courthouses and 164 courtrooms over the past five years, along with the layoffs of nearly 2,000 court employees.

Among those who presented information to the committee was Consumer Attorneys of California Past President Niall McCarthy. He serves as co-chair of the Open Courts Coalition, a broad-based bipartisan group that is advocating for restoring court budget cuts. McCarthy presented details of how the court closures and staffing reductions that have resulted from budget cuts take a toll on Californians who seek justice in civil matters.

“These budget cuts have left the system bloated with meritorious civil cases that cannot move forward,” McCarthy told the committee. “There simply are not enough bodies to work on the cases. Plaintiffs are accepting less than they are due because they simply can’t wait to get their case in front of a judge or jury.

“We know what the problem is,” McCarthy continued. “It’s time to fix it. And the only fix is more general fund money for the courts.”

The amount of general fund revenue directed to California’s courts has decreased by more than \$1.1 billion over the past five years. The governor’s proposed 2013-14 budget includes using \$200 million earmarked for court construction to offset cuts to court operations funds.

Judges and other court officials from around the state told Judiciary Committee members how court budget cuts have produced long waits for court services and, in some counties, exceptionally long and difficult travels to access the courts that remain open. The executive officer of the Los Angeles Superior Court expressed concern that citizens will be left frustrated by the difficulties of resolving disputes in court and will begin taking matters into their own hands in such matters as child custody and landlord-tenant disputes.

Consumer Attorneys of California is a professional organization of plaintiffs’ attorneys representing consumers seeking accountability against wrongdoers in cases involving personal injury, product liability, environmental degradation and other causes.

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