



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

Our courts protect society, now let's protect our courts With budget debate heating up, CAOC urges court funding boost

SACRAMENTO (April 8, 2014) – As state lawmakers dive anew into serious budget debate, Consumer Attorneys of California leaders Tuesday called on the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown to increase funding to California's beleaguered court system.

CAOC President John M. Feder, noting that the Assembly and Senate court budget subpanels are set to hold hearings this week, said a significant new revenue influx is needed to begin reversing more than \$1.1 billion in General Fund budget cuts to the courts since 2008.

“Our courts help protect society, but California hasn't protected its courts,” Feder said. “After years of cutbacks, courts today receive just a penny of every tax dollar collected by the state. Now we're on the brink of even more cuts that will mean closed courtrooms, slashed operating hours and, ultimately, justice denied.”

Last year saw the closure of 51 courthouses and 205 courtrooms. With criminal cases enjoying constitutional protections, the biggest impact has been on civil cases including those involving domestic violence, family law and foster care issues.

Court funding proposed in Gov. Brown's initial 2014-15 budget blueprint fell more than \$150 million short of the level needed simply to match last year's level. Feder said the state needs to do far more to restore the courts to full operations, asking that lawmakers aim at significantly boosting 2014-15 funding.

“Everyone knows our criminal courts help put bad guys away, but our civil courts also serve a pivotal role by settling disputes brought by individuals and businesses,” Feder said. “They protect us from dangerous products, defective automobiles, problematic pharmaceuticals and other threats.”

He noted how the [dogged efforts of a trial lawyer working through the civil courts](#) recently helped hold General Motors accountable for a faulty ignition switch implicated in the deaths of more than a dozen motorists. In recent years, civil court cases have reined in Wall Street's deceptive mortgage practices, pulled dangerous prescription drugs off the shelves and exposed misuse of public funds.

The Assembly Budget Subcommittee on courts meets Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. at the Capitol in hearing room 444. On Thursday, its Senate counterpart holds a hearing in room 113 at 9:30 a.m. or upon conclusion of floor session.

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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