



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

CAOC-sponsored bill would ease burden on courts, reduce litigation costs and hasten justice

SB 1012 expands civil cases qualifying for expedited jury trials

SACRAMENTO (Feb. 6, 2018) – More civil cases would qualify for California’s expedited jury trials, saving time and money for all parties, under legislation sponsored by Consumer Attorneys of California that was introduced in the state Senate today.

SB 1012, authored by Sen. Bob Hertzberg (D-Los Angeles), would reduce the burden on California courts and cut litigation costs for all parties by increasing the number of cases that qualify for the state’s expedited jury trials program, which has been in effect since 2011.

Under current law, expedited jury trials are required (with some exceptions) for “limited” civil cases seeking \$25,000 or less. SB 1012 would expand that threshold to cases up to \$50,000. Accounting for inflation, that’s approximately the value of \$25,000 in 1986, the last time California changed the limit.

SB 1012 is in response to a report last year by the Commission on the Future of California’s Court System that found that litigation costs are outpacing the value of cases, causing fewer and fewer to be resolved on the merits. Studies show that rising litigation costs are primarily due to the longer length of time it takes to process cases through the system.

Expedited jury trials were adopted to reduce the strain on courts by limiting the time spent on smaller-dollar cases. These trials have smaller juries and allow five hours for each side to present their case. The format saves expense for both sides and leads to faster justice for Californians.

“Under current law, the cost of going through a complete trial can easily surpass the actual value of a case, which discourages people from seeking justice in the first place,” said Sen. Hertzberg. “SB 1012 will pave the way for reform that will allow Californians to more easily access our court system.”

“We look forward to expanding use of expedited trials, giving more Californians access to timely justice and helping our underfunded courts manage their caseloads,” said CAOC President Lee Harris.

SB 1012 is expected to be amended to add an additional tier for cases above \$50,000 in an effort to boost court efficiencies. The goal is to work with stakeholders to develop processes and procedures for this new tier of cases, including reasonable limits on the amount of discovery and number of expert witnesses, as well as incorporating technology to more efficiently try cases.

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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