



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

Judicial Council approves CAOC-backed actions to ensure justice in civil courts during COVID-19 crisis

But more actions are needed by state's top governing body for courts

SACRAMENTO (April 6, 2020) – Responding to a request by Consumer Attorneys of California, the state Judicial Council today enacted emergency measures to allow the state's civil justice system to continue conducting business during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The council acted to extend the statute of limitations until 90 days after the crisis is over, approved a procedure for remote depositions to help protect public health and granted a six-month extension of the five-year limit for bringing civil cases to trial.

But the steps taken by the state's top governing body for the courts fell short of all that is needed to ensure that legal rights remain unsullied and access to justice is maintained during the coronavirus pandemic. Two other actions being pushed by CAOC – ensuring electronic service of process and the ability to seek urgent ex parte approval of minor's compromise petitions – are expected to be acted on by the Judicial Council in the coming days.

“Today's steps will go a long way to protecting legal rights and access to justice during this crisis,” said CAOC President Micha Star Liberty. “But there is more to be done, such as setting a uniform standard for rescheduling trials once the crisis concludes.”

The actions by the Judicial Council followed a March 27 emergency order enacted by Gov. Gavin Newsom that gave Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye and the California Judicial Council authority to take necessary steps to ensure legal rights aren't undercut. The health crisis caused authorities to shut down courthouses up and down the state and put the justice system in a tailspin.

CAOC President Micha Star Liberty, CEO and Chief Lobbyist Nancy Drabble and the CAOC advocacy team pushed for Newsom's emergency declaration in talks over recent weeks with the governor's office and continued that effort with the Judicial Council through last week and into the weekend preceding today's hearing, which was conducted by conference call.

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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