



# CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

*Seeking Justice for All*

## Grim news for justice in revised state budget

New plan calls for more than half a billion dollars in cuts to courts

**SACRAMENTO (May 14, 2012)** – As part of a revised state budget that is loaded with bad news for Californians, the state's justice system will face a reduction of more than \$540 million in what it receives from the state general fund during the 2012-13 budget year.

The May budget revision released today by Gov. Jerry Brown includes a one-time decrease of \$300 million for funding of trial courts, a reduction state officials have proposed be offset by local court reserves.

The "May revise" includes an additional one-time cut of \$240 million in the state general fund's contribution to trial court operations, but calls for that reduction to be offset with funds that had been set aside for court construction. As a result, 38 court construction projects will be delayed and the money will be redirected permanently to trial courts. In addition, \$50 million a year will be redirected from court construction to trial court operations.

As grim as the news was for 2012-13, the most serious impact on California's justice system likely won't be felt until the 2013-14 budget year. That's when, according to state officials, "because of reliance on one-time reductions and the loss of reserves and fund balances, trial courts will need to achieve reductions through operational changes and efficiencies." That will likely translate to additional court closures, delays and frustrations for Californians looking for justice when they've been cheated or injured.

Some of the most serious effects on the courts could be prevented if Californians approve Gov. Brown's tax initiative that will be on the November ballot. Consumer Attorneys of California was one of the first state organizations to support the proposal, with an eye toward doing everything possible to keep the courts open and accessible to ordinary citizens. But if the initiative does not pass and the state economy continues to stumble, the cuts to state courts next year may be through bone.

"California citizens who use the courts have been placed in a tidal wave without a life boat," said Consumer Attorneys of California President Niall McCarthy. "Sadly, they and their constitutional rights are being washed away."

Since 2007-08, ongoing state support for the judicial branch from the state general fund has been reduced by \$653 million. During the past five years, California's courts have been among the hardest hit sector of California government, enduring a more than 30% General Fund cut.

*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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