

## JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Judicial Branch consists of the Supreme Court, courts of appeal, trial courts, and the Judicial Council. The trial courts are funded with a combination of funding from the General Fund, county maintenance-of-effort requirements, fines, fees, and other charges. Other levels of the Judicial Branch receive most of their funding from the General Fund. The Budget includes total funding of \$3.6 billion (\$1.7 billion General Fund and \$1.9 billion other funds) for the Judicial Branch, of which \$2.8 billion is provided to support trial court operations. The Judicial Council is responsible for managing the resources of the Judicial Branch.

In 1998, California voters passed a constitutional amendment that provided for voluntary unification of the superior and municipal courts in each county into a single, countywide trial court system. By 2001, all 58 counties had voted to unify their municipal and superior court operations. This was the culmination of over a decade of preparation and work to improve court coordination and uniform access to justice. The Trial Court Funding Act of 1997 consolidated the costs of operating California's trial courts at the state level. The Act was based on the premise that state funding of court operations was necessary to provide more uniform standards and procedures, economies of scale, structural efficiency and access for the public. The Act created a state-funded trial court system and capped county contributions, having the state assume responsibility for growth in the costs of court operations.

In planning for future court demands, the Chief Justice has created the Commission on the Future of California's Court System. The Commission expects to release initial

recommendations in the spring of 2017 on initiatives to effectively and efficiently enhance access to justice. The Administration is committed to working with the Chief Justice on improving access and modernizing court operations through innovative approaches.

Significant Adjustments:

- Trial Court Employee Costs—The Budget includes \$7.1 million General Fund for trial court employee health and retirement benefit costs.
- Trial Court Trust Fund Revenues—The Budget includes a total of \$55 million General Fund to backfill a continued decline of fines and penalty revenues expected in 2017-18.
- Case Management System Replacement—The Budget includes one-time funding of \$4.1 million General Fund in 2017-18 and \$896,000 General Fund in 2018-19 to replace the Sustain Justice Edition Case Management System in nine small superior courts across California. This proposal continues the Administration’s commitment to assisting the courts with the modernization of case management systems.
- Judicial Officer Salaries—Under existing law, Judicial Officer salaries are tied to the salary increases of other state workers. The Budget proposes amending statute so that Judicial Officers receive the proportional equivalent of the salary increases that have been provided retroactively to July 1 to state workers.
- Trial Court Judge Reallocation—The Administration proposes to reallocate four vacant superior court judgeships. This will shift judgeships to the areas of the state where workload is highest without increasing the overall number of judges.