



# NEWS RELEASE

**Los Angeles Superior Court  
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June 20, 2014

STATEMENT FROM LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT  
PRESIDING JUDGE DAVID S. WESLEY  
REGARDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2014-15 TRIAL COURT BUDGET

Over the past weeks, courts across the state have made clear to the legislature that the level of court funding proposed in the Governor's May Revision will result in further declines in access to justice across the state. Yet that is the level of funding that is in the budget that Governor Jerry Brown signed today.

While other areas of government are seeing much-needed investment, the expected level of trial court funding will do nothing to reverse the decline of California's court system.

The California courts have suffered five years of reductions in state funding, and many courts have reduced their workforces by as much as one quarter, with no lessening of their statutory and constitutional obligations. We are being forced to ration access to justice.

Anyone who uses the courts sees the results: long lines at courthouses, unacceptably long waits for litigants to have their day in court, and judicial rulings languishing unenforced due to the lack of staff to complete them. Divorcing parents cannot get an order deciding who has custody of their children. Victims of fraud, and companies seeking to enforce contracts, cannot get their cases before a judge. People trying to do the right thing and pay a traffic ticket, find themselves stymied by long lines and antiquated technology. Crime victims, and the law enforcement officers acting as witnesses in their cases, are burdened with long travel times because the local courthouse was closed.

Californians deserve better. The Governor's May Revision recognized that "a strong court system is a basic function and service of government." (*Governor's Budget May Revision, 2014-15*, page 56). But the budget belies this sentiment. As we have heard from presiding judges across the state, this budget will result in

further decreases in service to the public and further damage to this basic function of government.

We in the Los Angeles Superior Court have already made significant changes to how we provide service to the public. We had hoped and expected that this year's budget would provide resources to rebuild those services. While we will avoid further reductions, there are no resources for expansion.

New funding for the judicial branch totals \$223 million, but only \$86 million of that is for trial court operations – and much less will be available for public services. The budget as passed will force many courts to divert funding from court operations to pay for unfunded expenses. It is likely that less than \$50 million will be available for improving public services – in a \$2.2 billion operation that has seen more than \$415 million in cuts.

This budget will not help people get their day in court. It will keep our courts in an impoverished state in which they will continue to be unable to provide timely justice to those who seek it.

The great jurist Learned Hand wrote, “If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: Thou shalt not ration Justice.”

Those who hold the purse strings of California government should heed these words.