



Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF VENTURA
Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

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*Executive Officer/Clerk
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VENTURA SUPERIOR COURT ANNOUNCES BUDGET REDUCTION MEASURES: Including Layoffs, Furloughs, Partial Court Closures and Reduced Service Hours

The actions outlined here are necessary to address the continued reductions in funding for the California court system. Since the 2008-09 fiscal year the Governor and Legislature have approved \$652 million in ongoing budget cuts to the judicial branch. These reductions have resulted in a budget deficit of \$5.8 million for 2011-12 for the Ventura Superior Court. This is along with the prospect of even deeper cuts in the 2012-13 fiscal year.

The Superior Court of California, County of Ventura, is providing notice of the decision of the Presiding Judge to institute partial closure days on the dates designated below.

The majority of the courtrooms and all clerks' offices at all three courthouse locations will be closed on November 23, 2011, December 23, 27, 28, 29 and 30, 2011 to mitigate the impact of additional unpaid employee furlough days on court operations. These partial closure days are not court holidays, so statutory deadlines will not be extended. However, drop boxes are currently provided outside each clerical office for filing papers or submitting payments. Documents placed in the boxes by 5:00 p.m. are deemed deposited for filing that same business day. Most cases already calendared for hearing will be rescheduled and the affected parties notified by the court.

The exterior walk-up window on the north side of the Hall of Justice, Government Center, 800 South Victoria Ave., will be open between 8:00 a.m. and 6:45 p.m. for handling criminal/traffic payments and collections payments only. Limited courtrooms will be open to hear urgent matters, and a judge will be available to sign any other necessary documents on an emergency basis at the Hall of Justice. A courtroom will also be open at the Juvenile Justice Center for urgent juvenile matters. All Simi Valley courtrooms will be closed.

These dates were selected to minimize the impact on the public and court staff as court business is generally the slowest during the holiday season.

Effective Tuesday, January 3, 2012, the hours of the Clerk's Office, Monday through Friday, shall be 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for traffic, civil, small claims, family law, criminal, juvenile, probate and records. Phone hours will be from 8:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., and 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. The Walk-up Express Window at the main Ventura Courthouse for Traffic and Collections payments only will remain open from 8:00 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Staffing in the Clerk's Offices has been significantly impacted by unfilled vacancies and furloughs. A reduction in the Clerk's Office hours will help court staff to timely process cases and prepare court calendars. Drop boxes are currently provided outside each Clerk's Office for filing papers or submitting payments. Documents placed in the boxes by 5:00 p.m. are deemed deposited for filing that same business day.

This week the court issued layoff notices to four (4) court employees after labor negotiations with the SEIU bargaining unit on budget reductions. After completing negotiations with the Criminal Justice Attorney's Association of Ventura County and SEIU, all court staff are taking mandatory unpaid furlough days ranging from thirteen (13) to eighteen (18) days depending on classification. All staff were required to take twelve (12) unpaid mandatory furlough days in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 fiscal years. This fiscal year's furloughs represents approximately 44,000 staff hours of lost work time directly impacting the court's ability to provide prior levels of service to the public.

In addition to the unpaid employee furloughs and staff layoffs, the court has also instituted other cost saving measures including, a freeze on hiring with thirty-seven (37) vacant positions that is projected to save \$2 million over the fiscal year; along with the reengineering of various court processes for efficiencies, reductions in non-salary related operating expenses, and the closure of the Colonia Self Help Center.

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