



News Release

Superior Court of California

County of San Francisco

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Release Date:

December 15, 2009

SAN FRANCISCO SUPERIOR COURT TAKES STEPS TO MANAGE GROWING BUDGET DEFICIT

SAN FRANCISCO -- Facing at least a \$14.3 million deficit for the upcoming fiscal year, the San Francisco Superior Court Bench has voted to eliminate the position of Assistant Chief Executive Officer (ACEO). The position will not be funded after December 31, 2009.

The ACEO position, which was created in December 1998, paid a salary of \$166,257. The ACEO oversaw the Court's day-to-day operations and directly supervised three Court Administrators (Civil Operation, Criminal Operation and Director of the Unified Family Court), the Director of Probate, a Senior Court Staff Attorney and a Deputy Court Clerk III. ACEO Sherri D. Camps, who has held the position since January 2008, will be retiring.

"Like other Courts in the state, the San Francisco Superior Court has been forced to eliminate the ACEO position due to a budget scenario that is only getting worse," said Presiding Judge James J. McBride. "This was a difficult decision, but it made the most sense given the dire budget forecast we face in the upcoming fiscal year."

Orange and Contra Costa counties also have eliminated ACEO positions.

The San Francisco Superior Court currently has 49 vacant positions out of 590 non-judicial staff positions. With the state facing more than a \$20 billion shortfall between the current fiscal year and FY 2010-2011, the Judicial Branch is bracing for more cuts. The Court currently projects a \$14.3 million budget deficit for FY 2010-2011 that would require

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major cost-cutting measures, including the possibility of staff reductions, additional court closure days and other service reductions. The deficit may require the Court to close Civil Departments, further eliminating access to justice in San Francisco. For example, if the Court closed 14 civil departments (half of all civil departments), trial delays would increase by an estimated 13 months.

To manage budget deficits for the past two fiscal years, the Court has used almost all of its reserve, leaving just \$500,000 left for the upcoming fiscal year. The Court has maintained a hiring, expenditure and travel freeze since April 2009. In addition, the Court is closed the third Wednesday of every month through June 2010 and employees are unpaid for each state-mandated Court closure day, resulting in a 4.62 percent pay cut for staff.

The Bench also voted during its December 1 meeting to appoint Claire Williams, Director of the Unified Family Court, to serve as an interim Chief Executive Officer, upon the retirement in February 2010 of longtime CEO Gordon Park-Li.

Williams – who has worked for the Court for more than a decade – will serve as the interim CEO while a special committee assigned by the Presiding Judge finds a replacement for Park-Li, who has worked at the Court for nearly 38 years.

“The Court is fortunate to have Claire’s leadership as we transition from Gordon’s steady guidance to a new CEO who will face some of the most challenging issues our Court has grappled with in decades,” Judge McBride said. “Claire will provide the continuity and stewardship of our Court while we undertake a process to find our next CEO.”

Williams, an attorney, has served as Director of Unified Family Court (UFC) since 2003. The UFC includes all Family Law, Dependency, Delinquency, and Child Support departments in San Francisco County. As Director, Williams is responsible for all operations of the UFC, including Family Court Services, Family Law Facilitator’s/Self-Help Center,

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Family and Youth Collaborative Courts, and the clerical and courtroom staff.

Williams established a Collaborative Courts program for Families and Youth within the UFC. Under her leadership, the UFC partnered with the San Francisco Unified School District, the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department, and the San Francisco Department of Health to create a Juvenile Drug Court and school for youth in the Juvenile Delinquency system. Williams developed, and now oversees, the implementation of the UFC's Self-Represented Litigant calendar. She combined Family Law and Dependency mediation departments to create Unified Family Court Services. Before assuming the Director position in 2003, Williams served as the staff attorney for the UFC for three years.

Williams recently took the lead in working with Judge McBride and other Judges and staff members on a plan to open a single asbestos department to better manage the Court's significant asbestos caseload.

Williams serves on multiple committees, including the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee to the California Judicial Council; Administrative Office of the Court's Violence Against Women's Education Project and Family Law Resource Guideline Project; and San Francisco County's Family Violence Council. She also is a member of the San Francisco Youth Treatment and Education Center's Board of Directors.

She also worked as an associate at McGlashan and Sarrail, LLC, and between 1996 and 1999, she was the principal of the Law Offices of Claire A. Williams. Prior to that, she was an associate at Adams & Romer. She received her Juris Doctorate from Golden Gate University School of Law in 1994 and a Bachelor's in 1988 from the University of Notre Dame.

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