



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

HALL OF JUSTICE
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STEPHEN M. HALL
PRESIDING JUDGE

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Date: July 29, 2009

To: Open Letter to Stakeholders of the San Mateo County Superior Court

From: Presiding Judge Stephen M. Hall

Subj: Superior Court Closures – Beginning on Wednesday September 16, 2009

The California Legislature and Governor have now reached agreement on a revised budget for 2009-2010. In recent weeks, the San Mateo County Superior Court's administration has been working cooperatively with our staff, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, the County Manager and other elected officials and stakeholders to deal with the financial challenges that we face. I cannot put into words the heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all those who have worked with us in this process.

With the Legislature passing the revised budget, they granted the Judicial Council the authority to close the Superior Court in each county one day per month due to the budgetary crisis that the State is facing¹. Today, the Judicial Council ordered that all Superior Courts of California be closed on the third Wednesday of each month. We have been informed that this mandatory closure will begin on Wednesday, September 16, 2009.

With closure of the Superior Courts mandated by the Judicial Council on the third Wednesday of each month, by law it is a "court holiday". All courtrooms and clerk's offices of the Superior Court will be mandated to be closed to the public on these days. An on-call judge will be available for emergency requests for: search warrants, emergency protective orders, probable cause determinations and arrest warrants. Although courtrooms will be closed to the public, the Presiding Judge will be working "in chambers" on the affected dates. Other judges may also be working in their chambers on the closure dates in question, however that is a decision that will be made by the judges individually. Additionally, while the clerk's offices will be closed to the public, skeleton crews will be working on the closure days to help maintain the workload at a current status so we can best serve the public when we are open.

¹ The trailer bill ABX3 37 contains the specific language regarding court closure.

For matters currently set on a third Wednesday starting with September 16, 2009, or for regularly scheduled calendars heard on Wednesdays, the court is currently working on a plan to address those issues and we will notify all affected parties as soon as possible.

The closure of the San Mateo County Superior Court is something being forced upon us. We continually expressed our preference to work cooperatively with our staff and stakeholder agencies to creatively resolve the budgetary challenges facing us². Those requests to date have been respectfully denied by the AOC. Now that we have been ordered to be closed, the San Mateo County Superior Court will follow the law and be closed on the mandated dates.

In anticipation of the mandated closure, our clerk's offices and courtroom departments have stopped setting matters on the third Wednesday of each month, commencing September 16, 2009. We also ask that all law enforcement agencies refrain from using September 16, 2009 or any subsequent third Wednesday of the month as an appearance date on any citations issued.

Thank you for your cooperation.

²We greatly appreciate the efforts of Board of Supervisors President Mark Church and others who wrote to legislators to express their opposition to the mandatory Court closure.