Superior Court of the State of California

County of Kings

Thomas DeSantos
Presiding Judge
of the
Superior Court

Jeffrey E. Lewis
Court Executive/Clerk
and
Jury Commissioner

* * *PUBLIC NOTICE of COURT CLOSURES* * *

October 1, 2015

Pursuant to California Government Code Section 68106*, the Superior Court of California, County of Kings hereby provides sixty (60) days' notice of its proposed intent to cease all operations at its Court locations in Avenal (at 501 E. King Street) and Corcoran (at 1000 Chittenden Avenue), with those services and staff relocating to the Hanford Courthouse, effective at the close of the Court's business day on December 18, 2015.

As a part of the judicial branch of government, the Kings Superior Court receives its annual budget allocation through the Judicial Council of California, an entity of the State. After the Governor and Legislature imposed over one billion dollars in state cuts to the judicial branch from Fiscal Years 2008-09 through 2012-13, every trial court state-wide had to absorb its share of reductions, by instituting various cost saving measures, including attrition, hiring freezes, eliminating vacated positions, furloughs, layoffs, early retirement programs, reengineering court processes for efficiencies, reduction of expenditures for services and supplies, and many other reasonable efforts to control labor, supply, and contractual service costs.

Historically, the Kings Superior Court has steadfastly endeavored to serve our citizenry to the best of its abilities, despite its very limited resources as an habitually under-funded and under-resourced court. Over the previous six fiscal years - which saw this court's baseline funding reduced by 30% and facing a 2012-13 structural deficit of approximately $1.3 million - Kings Superior Court decreased its expenses by more than $2,495,000 by means of a 21% reduction in line staff, the elimination of 23% of all management positions, an average of 14 furlough days per year taken by all residual personnel [the equivalent of an annual 5.3% pay reduction], increasing employee cost-share of medical and retirement benefits, executing a court closure in Lemoore, and through a combination of expansion, terminations, and rollbacks in vendor contracts.

With the economy improving in the state by 2013, trial courts anticipated a significant restoration of trial court funding by 2014-15. However, the state's three-fiscal years failure to provide even nominal financial relief from years of unprecedented budget reductions, and the recent elimination of the court's right to carry-over yearly fund balances, now compels the state's trial courts to take further remedial actions to maintain the most basic judicial services.

For Kings County residents, notwithstanding this Court's history of prudent fiscal planning, revenue generating strategies, and effective cost-cutting measures [including the multiple times Kings Superior

Court has announced reduced service levels due to on-going fiscal constraints], this Court now finds it necessary to institute the above closures in light of unresolved critical staffing shortages.

The court regrets having to make these very difficult decisions with regard to court operations, which, it is recognized, will lessen the degree of access to justice for some of our county's citizens. Kings Superior Court does so only after exhausting all other alternatives to cope with multiple years of statewide trial court funding reductions with only marginal reinvestment efforts in the Courts recently demonstrated by California's Governor, Senate and Assembly.

Kings Superior Court believes, however, that these measures are unavoidable and represent a sound management practice, utilizing remaining staff resources as efficiently as possible and which can be best accomplished by consolidating operations into our Hanford facilities to better serve the majority of our County residents. This consolidation of services will also serve to enhance security and safety for the public and staff, as Hanford provides security elements not available at the Avenal or Corcoran Courthouses. Further, this consolidation is also in line with the Court's long-term plan of merging Avenal and Corcoran services into the new 10-courtroom Hanford Courthouse, which should be operational in February 2016.

To summarize, after six years of untenable state-imposed budget reductions and attendant unacceptable personnel losses, this intended decision to consolidate all trial court operations in Hanford:

- Was agreed upon, reluctantly, by this Superior Court's judges and Court Administrator in mid-September 2015,
- Was reached *only after* multiple assessments of the overall impacts on Avenal and Corcoran residents and law enforcement agencies were conducted (and potential alternatives to closures and staff relocation were considered), and
- Was determined to be the most suitable course of action to meet and improve our court's core mission of providing accessible, timely service to the citizenry of all of Kings County.

Any interested person or entity is encouraged to provide input regarding this noticed plan of action. Comments should be provided in writing, no later than 5:00 p.m. on November 30, 2015, and be addressed to:

Jeffrey E. Lewis, Court Executive Officer
Kings County Superior Court
1426 South Drive
Hanford, California, 93230

You may also send your comments via email to jlewis@kings.courts.ca.gov. As required by Government Code 68106(b)(2)(A), the Court will review and consider all public comments received.

*Government Code section 68106 requires trial courts to provide notice to the public at least 60 days before closing any courtroom or closing or reducing the hours of clerks' offices by conspicuous posting within its facilities and on its public website.

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* * *PUBLIC NOTICE * * *

Court limited hours during the holidays

October 9, 2015

Pursuant to California Government Code Section 68106, the Superior Court of Kings County hereby gives notice of its intent to reduce staffing and temporarily limit the hours and operations of its Divisions and Departments between December 21, 2015 and January 1, 2016, as follows:

1. The Jury Office will be closed from December 21, 2015 through January 1, 2016; any questions regarding jury service should be directed to the Clerk of the Court at the Hanford Courthouse.

2. On Monday, December 21, 2015 through Wednesday, December 23, 2015, staffing of all trial departments of the Hanford Courthouse will be reduced resulting in a temporary closure of multiple courtrooms. During this period, the Hanford Courthouse Clerk's Office hours of operation will remain the same [Monday through Wednesday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.]; however, longer processing and response times may be experienced.

3. On Thursday, December 24, 2015, the Hanford Courthouse will close at 12:00 p.m. There will be no hearings or other proceedings scheduled after 12:00 p.m. on that day. The Clerk's Office will close at 12:00 p.m.; however a drop box for documents and payments will be available. Documents and payments deposited therein before 4:00 p.m. on December 24, 2015 will be deemed filed/received on that date. Documents/payments received after 4:00 p.m. on December 24, 2015, will be filed/received on December 28, 2015. Drop boxes are located in Buildings A and B of the Hanford Courthouse located at 1426 South Drive, Hanford, California 93230. The drop box located in Building A is located on the south end of the building and the one in Building B is located on the north end of the building.

4. On Friday, December 25, 2015, the Hanford Courthouse will be closed.

5. On Monday, December 28, 2015 through Thursday, December 31, 2015, staffing of all trial departments of the Hanford Courthouse will be reduced resulting in a temporary closure of multiple courtrooms. During this period, the Hanford Courthouse Clerk's Office hours of operation will remain the same [Monday through Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.]; however, longer processing and response times may be experienced.

6. On Friday, January 1, 2016, the Hanford Courthouse will be closed.

7. Pre-December 21, 2015 operations and staffing levels will be restored to all Divisions of the Kings County Superior Court on Monday, January 4, 2016.

The Superior Court Judges in Kings County have concluded that the temporary closure of the Jury Office, limitation in operational trial departments, and reduction of hours of the Hanford Courthouse as set forth above, is necessary in order to address the continued budget concerns and attendant personnel shortage that the Court faces. The limitation of hours and services set forth above is just one of many cost-saving steps taken by the Court to address California's fiscal crisis.

Any interested person or entity wishing to comment on the court's plan of action should direct the same on or before December 9, 2015 to Jeffrey E. Lewis, Court Executive Officer at Kings County Superior, 1426 South Drive, Hanford, California, 93230. You may also send your comments via email to jlewis@kings.courts.ca.gov. All public input will be considered.