



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: September 1, 2009

CONTACT: John C. Fitton, Court Executive Officer 650-363-4516

Court Announces Reduced Layoffs

Due to the unprecedented level of funding reductions from the state, the Superior Court of San Mateo regretfully announces that twenty-eight people, from all levels of the organization, will be laid off effective October 2, 2009. Original estimates placed the number of laid-off staff at sixty rather than the twenty-eight who will be notified this week. "We are using a significant portion of our remaining fund balance reserves to minimize the impact of immediate employee layoffs," Court Executive Officer John Fitton said. "We are doing layoffs incrementally in a way that allows the court to ensure that essential services to the public and reasonable workloads for staff are maintained."

"This is an extremely painful time for the court and its employees," said Presiding Judge Stephen M. Hall. "We value every single one of our colleagues, and we are deeply sorry to have to resort to layoffs." "We recognize that this is a hardship for those directly affected," Fitton continued, "and this is a serious loss for our organization. We would not do this unless it was absolutely necessary."

With state funding reductions emanating from the fiscal crisis in California, the San Mateo Superior Court ended fiscal year 2008-09 with a \$3.89 million deficit out of a \$51.5 million budget. Originally, tracking documents and analysis provided to the Court Executive Officer were overly optimistic in predicting ongoing salary savings from 35 vacant positions plus reductions in supplies and services. The true depth of the shortfall wasn't apparent until after the end of the fiscal year. The Administrative Office of the Courts recently confirmed the deficit and revenue figures after the court asked them to review the budget figures.

In addition to the layoffs, the court has also significantly reduced other spending. "Services and supplies have been cut to the bone," Fitton said. "However, personnel costs account for the vast majority of our budget." To reduce personnel costs further, many judicial officers and the Court Executive Officer are donating 4.62% of their salary (which equates to one unpaid workday per month) back to the court.

Fitton added that this year state funding will be cut another \$3.87 million and the year after that he has been told by the state to expect cuts of \$4.68 million. “The hard reality is that the use of reserves is not sustainable. We don’t know if there will be additional state reductions beyond the cuts we are currently aware of - therefore I cannot say that this will be our final message announcing layoffs, though I certainly hope it is. I can say that we will do all in our power to work collaboratively with our employees and continue to meet with our unions to reduce any potential future layoffs.”

###