



# Superior Court of California

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

*Michael D. Planet*  
*Executive Officer/Clerk*  
*and Jury Commissioner*

October 11, 2012

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **EAST COUNTY COURTHOUSE CONTINUED SERVICE**

Ventura Superior Court Presiding Judge Vincent J. O'Neill has announced that, with the support of the Ventura County Bar Association, the court has formed a unique partnership with the County of Ventura and several cities. This collaboration will allow the court to continue to serve the east county by keeping the East County Courthouse open two days a week, at least through June of 2013. The court had previously announced the suspension of all East County Courthouse services effective on July 1, 2012, as a result of five consecutive years of budget cuts imposed on the court by the Governor and state legislature.

The East County Courthouse, located at 3855 Alamo St. in Simi Valley, opened in 1991 and had for many years been staffed by four judges and commissioners, as well as courtroom clerks and other support staff who were available five days a week to file court documents and accept payments of fines and fees, among other duties. As state officials repeatedly reduced funding to the judicial branch, courts all over the state have reduced staff and taken other cost-saving measures. In Ventura County, the court is in the fifth year of a hiring freeze, and has imposed as many as 18 unpaid furlough days on its employees. In addition, twenty-four court employees were laid off in 2011 and 2012. Overall, the court's operations support staff has been reduced 23%.

O'Neill explained, "Unfortunately, we simply no longer have enough employees to staff a full-time courthouse in Simi Valley while effectively operating the Hall of Justice in Ventura and the Juvenile Division in El Rio. We are pleased that Supervisor Peter Foy stepped forward and initiated a series of meetings involving county and city officials, Ventura County Bar Association leaders, and the court.

The leadership of Supervisor Foy and retired Simi Valley City Manager Mike Sedell in forming a partnership with city and county elected officials has resulted in enough local funding to allow the court to maintain limited services in Simi Valley. The active support of Ventura County Bar Association President Dien Le and Ventura County Trial Lawyers Association President Allen Ball was also instrumental in this unique effort.”

O’Neill added, “I am not aware of any other county in the state that has formed a similar coalition of government officials to combat cuts to the courts. We are most appreciative of the willingness of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and the city councils of Simi Valley, Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Oxnard and Ventura to contribute funds to this effort. The result will be less crowded courtrooms in Ventura, and shorter drives for police officers and those wishing to challenge their traffic tickets, as well as small claims litigants, landlords and tenants who reside in the East County.”

East County citizens may continue to pay fines and fees at the East County Courthouse in Simi Valley five days a week, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. Court documents for all types of cases may be dropped off on Mondays and Tuesdays between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. A court commissioner presides over small claims and unlawful detainer (eviction) cases on Mondays, and traffic infraction cases on Tuesdays. Temporary restraining orders can be obtained on both days in cases of harassment, workplace violence or elder abuse.

No court proceedings take place at the East County Courthouse on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays. Criminal arraignments, civil motions trials and family law matters that formerly took place at the East County Courthouse are now heard at the Ventura Hall of Justice. A total of three judges and several support staff have been transferred from the East County Courthouse to the Ventura Hall of Justice since January of 2012.

“We are hopeful that the reduction of services to our East County citizens is temporary, but we have been told to expect additional cuts a year from now,” O’Neill said. “It is possible that the situation will get worse before it gets better, but we will continue to do all we can within our budgetary means to provide equal access to justice for all Ventura County citizens.”

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