

## Statement from BASF Regarding Cuts to San Francisco Superior Court

**July 15, 2011 – San Francisco** -- You may have heard that the California state legislature and Governor Jerry Brown have reduced the judicial branch budget by an additional \$150 million despite the strong and unified opposition by all leaders of the California trial and appellate courts and by legal associations across our state including The Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF), with the support of the American Bar Association (ABA).

This reduction follows an earlier cut of \$200 million in March 2011. These two reductions were in addition to the state's borrowing \$440 million from a variety of trial court funds and converting \$350 million designated for court construction funding to the state's general fund. While the judicial branch budget represents less than three percent of the overall budget, its comparatively modest budget has been slashed by more than thirty percent.

The San Francisco Superior Court had warned that the effect of these cuts would be the closure of 25 courtrooms and the layoff of 40 percent of court personnel. That process will begin next week, as our court will have the painful obligation to notify a significant number of additional court employees that they will be laid off. All but one court commissioner who is federally funded will also see their positions eliminated.

It will be nearly impossible for our courts to conduct business effectively in the absence of court commissioners, who play an important role in ensuring that cases move through our court system without undue delay. Those layoffs combined with next week's impending layoffs will further hamper our courts from providing fundamental services to those who live in our community.

The inadequate funding of our third branch of government threatens our very democracy, and it may present an unconstitutional infringement upon the independence of the courts and their ability to function properly. In response to this crisis, BASF is forming a task force focused on two purposes:

- Advocating for court funding at a level that will ensure access to justice, and
- Educating our members, our elected leaders, and the public of the crucial role our courts play in ensuring that people are not deprived of basic liberties, that individuals are protected from dangerous or deceptive products and services, and that businesses are assured of fair and efficient commerce in our state.

The cuts by the governor and the legislature demand our immediate response and intervention. The legislature and our governor must understand that our courts – the third branch of government – are fundamental to our safety and security, and to our very way of life in California. There is no branch of government more critical to or more frequently accessed by the public than our courts. We must support our courts to ensure that historically disadvantaged communities are protected

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by the rule of law, and to make sure that all disputes – whether social, political, economic, or otherwise – are resolved peacefully and efficiently.

As officers of the court, the 7,500 members of The Bar Association of San Francisco have a responsibility to ensure that our judiciary's critical role be understood by our elected officials and by our public, that our courtrooms remain open and adequately staffed, and that access to justice remain one of the highest priorities in San Francisco.

The Bar Association of San Francisco is committed to standing with our courts, advocating for these important priorities to our representatives in Sacramento, and educating citizens to the crucial role of our courts and the essential benefits we all derive from a well-funded court system. Through our task force, our unified effort will help to ensure that our judiciary's voice be heard in advocating for appropriate funding in guaranteeing access to justice.

**Priya Sanger**  
**President, The Bar Association of San Francisco**

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The Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) is a nonprofit voluntary membership organization of over 8,000 attorneys, law students and legal professionals in the Bay Area. Founded in 1872, BASF is one of the largest and most dynamic metropolitan bar associations in the U.S., with a long and distinguished record of community action, public service and service to the legal profession.