

The Bar Association of San Francisco Will Stand With Hundreds of Others to Protest Cuts to Court Funding and Access to Justice

San Francisco, CA – April 17 – More than 1,000 people are expected to stand together in solidarity at the “Stand Up For Justice” rally on April 18, 2012, on the steps of San Francisco City Hall, including representatives of fifty statewide organizations. The rally’s message to Governor Brown and members of the California Legislature will be clear: Keeping California’s courthouses open to the public is crucial to our communities, businesses, and our state’s future.

Sixteen speakers will stress the vital need for a properly funded California court system for the safety and well-being of citizens and businesses. Speakers include California Attorney General Kamala Harris; former California State Senator Joseph Dunn, now executive director of the State Bar of California; retired California Supreme Court Justice Carlos Moreno; retired Santa Clara County Judge LaDoris H. Cordell; San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee; as well as representatives of unions, community organizations, legal aid groups and legal organizations.

According to Kelly M. Dermody, 2012 BASF president, “Widespread layoffs, staff furloughs, reduced clerks’ office hours, the closing of self-help centers, and courtroom closures in San Francisco and across the state have meant that justice is being delayed and in some cases denied. Some people are facing life and death consequences solely due to funding cutbacks. The Stand Up For Justice rally will present a unified message to the legislature and the governor: ‘Maintain adequate court funding to prevent even more devastating outcomes and ensure access to justice for all.’”

The impact of the over 30 percent reduction in general fund reductions since 2008 has been felt statewide in the form of closed civil courtrooms, vital court personnel being laid off, reduced office hours of operation and slashed services to the public. In 2011:

- In Los Angeles, a man successfully fought a wrongful eviction with the help of pro bono lawyers. He died sleeping outside waiting for the order to be processed.
- In San Diego, a woman filed for a restraining order against her abusive spouse. Unable to get a hearing due to budget cuts, and at risk of beatings at home, she slept in her car at the superior court.
- In San Mateo County, due to cuts in staff and service hours, in the three-month period from July to September 2011, over 100 women were unable to receive timely restraining orders.
- In many California counties, child custody cases go unresolved due to a lack of court resources, including vital personnel.
- Business disputes throughout California cannot be resolved as hearing and trial dates are unavailable. Similarly, consumers and victims of fraud cannot get their day in court.
- Californians stand in line at courts for hours to deal with matters as basic as traffic tickets.

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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.