



California Legislature
Senate Subcommittee on Aging and Long-Term Care

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To All Interested Parties:

I would like to invite you to Sacramento in November of 2003 for a workgroup discussion focusing on the access that less-than-affluent elderly have to the State's judicial system. Specifically, the workgroup will discuss a proposal for the Judicial Council (a policy-making authority over the state court system) to oversee or conduct a survey of professionals who work with this population. The purpose of the Judicial Council survey would be to determine what specific impediments may be denying these individuals access to the court system, and how to address these impediments. The survey would seek the insight and views of people including, but not limited to, the following: probate and mental health judges and staff, Adult Protective Service employees, Ombudsman employees, senior center social workers, hospital discharge planners, bankers, professional conservators and trustees, lawyers, and elder health care providers.

In a published decision (Conservatorship of Levitt), the Second District Court of Appeals asserted that the Legislature should conduct the necessary fact-finding to determine whether access to the State's judicial system poses a problem for the less-than-affluent elderly. The workgroup would be charged with determining how the Legislature, through the work of the Judicial Council's survey, could uncover the impediments that may deny some elderly individuals access to the judicial system.

This discussion will be a critical step in examining California's civil justice system, and the extent to which lawyers, courts, professional conservators and related agencies are serving the less-than-affluent elderly population.

The workgroup meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19th, 2003, at the State Capitol in Sacramento. Should you be able to attend this workgroup, more details will follow. Please respond to Sarah Sutro-Steenhausen of the Senate Subcommittee on Aging and Long Term Care to confirm your attendance at 916-323-8436 or sarah.sutro@sen.ca.gov.

I thank you and I wish you well.

John Vasconcellos
Senator, 13th District