



# Superior Court of California County of Orange

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TO: The Honorable Board of Supervisors, County of Orange  
The Honorable Mayor and Members of the Council, City of Santa Ana  
Chair, Orange County Civic Center Authority

I am writing this letter in order to apprise you of numerous complaints that the Superior Court has received from members of the public who have been summoned to the Central Justice Center in Santa Ana to fulfill their jury service requirements, as well as similar complaints received from court staff, and undoubtedly shared by county employees, who work in the courthouse.

Over the last several months the homeless population just outside the courthouse doors has dramatically increased. If this problem continues to expand, it may further impact our ability to attract sufficient jurors and qualified employees to the Central Justice Center and to protect the safety and health of those with business in the courthouse.

In 2015, over 1.3 million people passed through the screening stations at Central Justice Center and the neighboring Complex courthouse, and during the fiscal year 2014-15, over 114,000 people appeared at Central Justice Center for jury service. As the Jury Commissioner, pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 10.610(b), it is my responsibility to make sure that the court "provides a forum for the fair and expeditious resolution of disputes." I am becoming increasingly concerned about the negative effect that the nearby homeless encampments are having on the cooperation of citizens summoned for jury service. As the homeless population continues to grow, we are now receiving an increasing number of complaints from potential jurors who have been hesitant and, in some cases, unwilling to serve on a jury at the Central Justice Center.

By way of example, recently a mother called on behalf of her 18-year-old daughter requesting that her jury service be transferred to Harbor Justice Center because she did not feel comfortable having her daughter report to jury service in Santa Ana. A number of elderly potential jurors have expressed concern over their safety, indicating that walking past the homeless community is a "scary" experience for them. Numerous other potential jurors have contacted the court indicating an unwillingness to travel to Santa Ana, expressing concerns about crime and personal safety. Additionally, a number of jurors have also indicated how difficult it is simply to step outside during a break and get some fresh air with the homeless encampment just a few feet from the courthouse's back entrance/exit. While these comments may not be accurate, and some are unfortunate and not usually based on first-hand experience, they nonetheless affect

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potential jurors' conduct. Clearly, this is affecting the willingness of potential jurors to respond to a jury summons to the courthouse.

A significant number of court staff are also expressing concerns about the health and safety conditions outside the courthouse. There is quite a bit of concern relating to conditions adjacent to the back entrance of the Central Justice Center and the employee parking structure near the Stadium. Staff members have witnessed the homeless emptying their "potty buckets" in the bushes near the back entrance of the courthouse, and observed feces in the bushes adjacent to the courthouse as well as in the stairwell in the library parking garage. There is a constant puddle of urine by the east side of the building at the base of the emergency stairwell, and individuals often urinate very near the courthouse, occasionally in front of courthouse windows. The smell of urine along the south side of the courthouse is often overwhelming. On one occasion, a trail of blood was observed near the Stadium parking lot.

Consistent with the comments above from potential jurors, court staff are now disinclined to step outside the back entrance of the courthouse just to take a break or go to lunch because of the situation. Employees are now hesitant to work past five o'clock because of the homeless encampment that is engulfing the courthouse. Finally, one Saturday several weeks ago a crew of plumbers was working on repairs for the court outside the courthouse when they were attacked by several rock-throwing homeless individuals. The plumbers were forced to abandon the job, and they subsequently refused to return to the court to finish their work.

I realize that this is an extremely complex problem with no easy solution, and that we are not the first to bring this problem to your attention. I am also aware of activities to address the problem by the county, the cities, faith-based organizations, the legal community, and many other organizations. However, I feel it is important for you to be aware that the problem is now impacting the over one million people who need to appear at the courthouse -- litigants, lawyers, and the public -- as well as potential jurors and court and county agency staff. As the homeless population continues to grow, I am concerned that we will lose potential jurors and very qualified staff members who will no longer want to work in such an uncomfortable environment as well as infringe on public access to justice.

If you need any additional information from us, or if we can be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Alan Carlson  
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Sheriff Hutchens  
All Superior Court Judges, Commissioners, and Staff