

Public Notice

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF KERN

April 2, 2013.

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Upcoming Service Changes -- Notice per Government Code 68106

The Superior Court, County of Kern, has realized significant, permanent budget reductions of \$9.7 Million or 27% of base funding since 2008. While the Court has implemented a number of cost savings measures—reductions in staff, increased pass through of pension and health care benefits to court employees, reduction of controllable expenses in excess of \$3 Million—the court will have a structural deficit of \$3.7 Million in the upcoming 2013-2014 budget year. In the past, the Court has been able to utilize savings from local cost cutting measures to balance the annual budget deficits to date. However, these savings are required by the Governor's budget to be depleted by the end of the upcoming budget year. Therefore, permanent service reductions, as described below, are required to balance the Court's budget.

You may submit a comment on these planned closures using the email address, WMAdmin@kern.courts.ca.gov on these planned closures.

- 1) **Reduction of Clerks' Office Hours:** The Court's last service hour reduction occurred in 2009. At that time, the Court instituted the following clerk's office hours: service counters, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM; and telephone hours, 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Given current court employee vacancy rates of 24% and the requirement to further reduce staffing by 20 to 25 additional positions in July 2013—the Court can no longer maintain current service levels.
 - **Effective June 10, 2013: Clerks' office hours will be reduced.** All court service counters will be open and telephone services will be available from 8:00 AM to 3:00 Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 AM to Noon on Fridays. Courtrooms are not impacted by this change and will remain open from 8:00 to 5:00.

Note: the court has installed drop boxes at all court locations, except Kern River. Documents placed in the drop box by 5:00 PM will be deemed filed on that date.

- 2) **Kern River Court Branch, Located in Lake Isabella (East Division), Closure:** Located at 7046 Lake Isabella Blvd, Lake Isabella, this branch has one courtroom and a clerk's office. Currently the location is open Monday through Friday, from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM . Budget reductions do not allow the court to maintain this level of operation at this location.

- **Effective June 10, 2013: The Kern River Branch in Lake Isabella will be closed.** All in-custody Felony calendars will be transferred from the Kern River Branch, Lake Isabella, to the Metro Division in Bakersfield. All in-custody and out-of-custody Misdemeanor cases and all civil cases—Small Claims, and Limited Civil Matters up to \$25,000—will be heard at the Ridgecrest Branch of the Superior Court (East Division), located at 132 E. Coso Ave, Ridgecrest, CA

Note: A drop box will NOT be available in Lake Isabella.

- 3) **Taft/Maricopa Branch Court (South Division), Reduced Services:** Located at 311 Lincoln Street, in Taft, this branch has one courtroom and a clerk's office. Currently this location is open from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

Effective September 9, 2013: The Taft/Maricopa branch will only be open one day per week, Thursday, from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The Branch will only hear Small Claims, Limited Civil up to \$25,000, and local traffic infractions. The Branch will only accept filings for matters to be heard at that location.

1. All CHP traffic infraction matters will be filed and heard at the Arvin/Lamont Branch (South Division), located at 12022 Main Street, Lamont California;
2. All Felony matters will be filed and heard at the Arvin/Lamont Branch;
3. All Misdemeanor matters will be filed and heard at the Arvin/Lamont Branch;
4. Court users may file civil and local traffic documents at the Taft/Maricopa Branch facility on Thursdays, when the court will be in operation or at any other court location in Kern County during normal business hours.

Note: A drop box will be available on Thursdays at the Taft Regional Court Facility for submitting local civil and traffic filings.

- 4) **Court Reporters. Metropolitan & Regional Divisions:** Currently, when court reporter services are available, the Court provides court reporters in Family Law and Unlimited Civil Matters.

- **Effective June 10, 2013:** Court reporter services provided by the Court for family law matters and unlimited civil matters will be discontinued with the exception of contempt, domestic violence, and abandonment proceedings. Per the Government Code, parties may provide their own court reporters for hearings in which no court provided services are available. A protocol for the use of contract reporters is under development and will be posted by June 1, 2013.