

A non-profit, non-partisan corporation of public-spirited leaders who have joined together to be catalysts for the economic well-being of the Inland Empire region of California – San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

## Inland Empire Residents Deserve Equal Access to Justice

- The Inland Empire is the fastest growing region in California, outpacing the rest of the state.
- As of December 2025, the Inland Empire has 4.7 million residents with infrastructure growth needs also increasing including those in judiciary.
- San Bernardino County is currently short 26 judges based on caseload and Riverside County is short 22 judges.
- The High Desert courthouses (Barstow and Victorville) currently have zero available courtrooms to hear criminal cases.
- The High Desert region has a higher poverty rate than the national average with many residents relying on public transportation. Limited or unavailable public transit to an alternative courthouse if needed and long travel distances create a significant barrier.



### Proposed Solutions

1. **Fund and fill 16 judgeships based on the priority list.** This will include judge positions in San Bernardino County, Riverside County, and a few others outside our region that are in crisis.
2. **Identify creative funding and/or formula alternative ways to fund a new High Desert Justice Center.** This could include county donated land plus all entitlements.

### Anticipated Outcomes

1. Recognizing that the state does not have the financial resources for all needed judges this year, **fully funding 16 judge positions based on the priority listing begins to address the critical needs.**
2. A new High Desert Justice Center:
  - Provides residents with access to basic court services.
  - Eliminates need to travel to distant courthouses.
  - Provides a safe space for these judiciary needs.
  - Adds new courtrooms for more judges to serve the region.
  - Provides for the secure transport of in-custody defendants.

### Future Needs

1. Due to the lack of courtroom space and judges, **we are advocating that remote proceedings be extended once more beyond the January 1, 2027, sunset date.**
2. The use of remote technology for both civil and criminal cases was established in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 state of emergency.
3. The use of remote proceedings continues in California courts.
4. Authority for this was extended in 2024 to expire January 1, 2027, with annual reporting compliance required per AB 170.