

SUSPENSION ORDERED FOR TREVOR GROUP ATTORNEYS

The State Bar Court Wednesday ordered the immediate suspension from the practice of law of a trio of Beverly Hills attorneys whose abuse of the state's Unfair Competition Law (B&P §17200 et seq.) has sparked months of media attention and the introduction of 11 bills in the Legislature.

After a two-day hearing and supplemental briefing, State Bar Court judge Richard Honn, a November 2002 appointee to the court by the Supreme Court, held in his [Decision and Order of Involuntary Inactive Enrollment](#) that "the State Bar has proven by clear and convincing evidence that Respondents have engaged in misconduct that has caused significant harm to clients and the public, that there is a reasonable likelihood that the harm will recur or continue, and that there is a reasonable probability that the State Bar will prevail on the merits of the underlying disciplinary matters."

The suspension of the three attorneys takes place three days after the decision. It is expected that the respondents will appeal.

The Trevor Law Group attorneys were accused of filing thousands of frivolous lawsuits against auto repair shops and restaurants. Their actions sparked the introduction of numerous pieces of legislation, only two of which -- [AB 95](#) by Assembly Judiciary Committee Chair [Ellen Corbett](#) (D-San Leandro) and [SB 122](#), authored by committee Chair [Martha Escutia](#) (D-Whittier) -- continue to move through the legislative process.

BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEES ACT ON JUDICIARY BUDGET

The Senate and Assembly budget subcommittees having oversight over general government and the Judiciary took action last week on the proposed budgetary reductions for the judiciary and for funding for the state's trial courts. The Assembly Budget Subcommittee #4 met three times during the week, once Tuesday afternoon, once Wednesday, and again Thursday evening until nearly 10:00 p.m. The counterpart Senate committee chaired by Senator [Joseph Dunn](#) (R-Santa Ana), very focused in its objective, met once on Wednesday afternoon. Both meetings produced preliminarily positive results for the judicial branch.

Both subcommittees voted to reduce the proposed reduction affecting the trial courts from \$116 million to

\$85 million dollars, and the proposed reduction affecting the appellate courts, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), and Habeas Corpus Resource Center from \$17.7 million to \$8.5 million. The subcommittees also voted to shelve controversial proposed statutory initiatives affecting court security (opening up the contract bidding process) and court reporters, restoring the correlating reductions (\$22 million and \$36.5 million, respectively) to the General Fund instead.

The subcommittees did direct the Judicial Council to explore alternative means of reducing court security costs, by establishing a working group to develop recommended uniform standards and requirements for trial court security services for consideration by the council. The working group will be composed of representatives from the judiciary, the California State Sheriffs Association, California State Association of Counties, Peace Officers Research Association, and California Coalition of Law Enforcement Associations.

The subcommittees' decisions, though very positive for the third branch of government in the short run, are still well shy of enactment. The subcommittee decisions must still be ratified by the full Budget Committees of the respective houses. Those decisions, in turn, may be overruled or revised by decision of a two-house conference committee -- or by agreement of the leadership of both houses and the Governor. And, finally, the Governor has the authority to reduce budgetary appropriations through his line-item veto authority.

HEARD IN AND AROUND THE CAPITOL

The major issue heard in and around the Capitol this week was -- again -- the huge budget deficit. To keep the state solvent, an \$11 billion loan is necessary. Even so, the Legislature's budget experts maintain that the fiscal mess will continue even if the economy improves. This week the [Legislative Analyst](#) projected a \$7 billion deficit for 2004-05, and said that deficits will continue for another several years unless legislators make permanent changes to the state budget -- namely chopping government spending and/or raising taxes. Adding to the problem is the fact that the state will have to pay millions of dollars in interest and fees to borrow the necessary funds. Various representatives of state entities -- from the University of California to the Legislature -- have told the Scene that their employees are being urged to retire and immediate layoff plans have been drafted.