

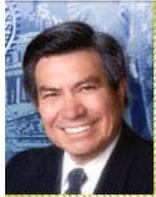
SPEAKER NUÑEZ REDUCES SIZE OF ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES, INCLUDING JUDICIARY PANEL

Assembly Speaker [Fabien Nuñez](#) Monday reduced the size of several Assembly committees, including the Judiciary Committee which hears most bills impacting the State Bar, the courts, and issues relating to the operation of the state's civil justice system.

A spokesman for Nuñez said that the change "was not political in any way, shape or form," but instead responded to the persistent complaints from members that they had too many committee assignments and were spread too thin. The initial cuts were small, reducing overall committee size by only 13%, or an average of one committee per member.

Assembly Republicans objected to the way the cuts were made, however, pointing out that the new committees were even more Democrat-dominated than before. Democrats hold 48 of the 80 Assembly seats (60%), but occupy more than 70% of the seats of all committees – in some cases much more.

The Judiciary Committee was reduced from 14 members to 11 by eliminating one seat held by a Republican (former committee Vice-Chair [Robert Pacheco](#) of Walnut), one seat held by a Democrat ([Loni Hancock](#) of Berkely), and a currently unfilled Democratic seat. The committee now has an 8-3 Democratic majority (73%), compared to the prior 10-4 (71%).



Some Assembly Republicans alleged that Pacheco's removal from the Judiciary panel (instead of non-lawyer [Patricia Bates](#), who is also termed-out) was in part punishment for the termed-out attorney's prominent role in legislation overhaul the state's Unfair Competition Law (B&P Code §§17200 et seq.). Pacheco refused to speculate on the issue. The Speaker's staff denied the allegation.

CHIEF JUSTICE GEORGE ADDRESSES LEGISLATURE

Chief Justice Ronald George made his annual "[State of the Judiciary Address](#)" to a joint convention of the Legislature Tuesday (March 23).

Like last year, George's speech focused on the need to maintain adequate funding for the state's courts.

George noted the "crucial role" the judicial branch plays in serving the people of California, emphasizing that a "strong and independent judicial system is not just another government program, nor is it a luxury to be afforded in good economic times and neglected when the state's revenues are down."

The Chief Justice stressed that existing and threatened reductions in resources "will destroy the powerful momentum that has greatly enhanced the judicial system's ability to provide meaningful access to justice for all Californians." He cited specific examples of ways in which "the strain on our judicial system caused by inadequate resources already has begun to adversely affect public safety, families, and self-represented litigants, as well as the stable court environment needed to create confidence in the business sector."

George also noted many of the judicial branch's accomplishments in the past year, including the adoption of a two-volume set of plain English jury instructions developed over the last several years by the Council's Task Force on Jury Instructions. The Chief Justice added that the instruction had won a national Burton Award for plain English writing, but emphasized that the award is not named after Senate President pro Tem [John Burton](#) (D-San Francisco), noting that "our jury instructions do not employ the type of plain English" that the salty, and occasionally profane, Burton favors.

FINAL JUDICIARY BUDGET HEARING SCHEDULED FOR ORANGE COUNTY

The last of the series of hearings on the state Judiciary budget being held by Senator [Joe Dunn](#) (D-Garden Grove), Chair of the Senate Budget Subcommittee overseeing that item, will be held Friday, April 2, in the Rancho Santiago Community College District Boardroom, 2323 North Broadway, 1st Floor, Santa Ana, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

DEADLINES UPCOMING

- [April 1](#) -- Spring Recess begins
- [April 12](#) -- Legislature reconvenes .
- [April 23](#) -- Last day for policy committees to hear and report Fiscal Committees fiscal bills introduced in their house.
- [May 7](#) -- Last day for policy committees to hear and report non-fiscal bills introduced in their house to floor.
- [May 14](#) -- Last day for policy committees to meet prior to June 1.