



For Immediate Release

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**CONSTITUTION PROJECT SAYS BUDGET CUTS
THREATEN AMERICA'S COURTS**

***Report Names 14 States in Which Budget Cuts
Threaten Effectiveness of Judicial System***

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 28, 2006) – In a report released today, the Constitution Project listed 14 states that have reduced the budgets for their judicial systems to a point that threatens their courts ability to perform their constitutional duties. The Constitution Project is an independent think tank that brings liberals and conservatives together to safeguard the Constitution.

“Independent courts are critical to preserving our constitutional system of checks and balances and protecting our rights,” said Virginia Sloan, president of the Constitution Project. “But fiscal cutbacks in the states are dramatically limiting Americans’ access to these courts and threatening the courts’ ability to dispense fair and impartial justice.”

The report, “The Cost of Justice: Budgetary Threats to America’s Courts”, says that in recent years funding shortages have forced states to close courthouse doors, reduce the number of judges and court staff and decrease the number and quality of services for those with special needs, including foreign-language and sign-language interpreters. The cutbacks have also limited or eliminated supplemental programs, such as domestic violence and drug treatment programs and specialized courts. According to the report, some court systems were forced to increase case filing or "user" fees, raising the cost of seeking justice beyond what many people can afford.

The courts hear cases that affect all of us, including consumer, business, environmental, criminal, and domestic disputes. Cutbacks on court space, hours of operation, personnel, and programs are a serious threat to individuals that rely on the courts to protect their freedoms and rights, the report says.

The report calls on legislatures to take whatever steps are needed to ensure that courts have appropriate levels of funding so that they can fulfill their constitutional obligations and ensure that all individuals have meaningful access to justice.

States cited in the report as the starkest examples of systems suffering from budgetary threats are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah and Washington.



For a full copy of the report, visit www.constitutionproject.org.

The Constitution Project is an independent think tank that promotes and defends constitutional safeguards by bringing together liberals and conservatives who share a common concern about preserving civil liberties. By forging consensus positions that bring together “unlikely allies” from both sides of the aisle, the Project broadens governmental and public support for constitutional protections

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