

Governor Edmund G. Brown
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento CA 95814

Re: Letter of Support for Additional State Funding to Help Maintain and Restore
County Law Library Services

Dear Governor:

At its January 23, 2018 meeting, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors voted to support the Council for California Law Librarians' request for a line-item budget allocation in the Governor's 2018-19 budget and in future years to support local county law libraries.

California law requires that every California county has a public law library. The county law library's primary mission is to provide open access to a reasonable collection of legal materials accessible to all members of our community, including self-represented litigants, as well as legally trained staffing to assist the public who are researching these materials. County law libraries provide a valuable public resource for the more than 80% of litigants in landlord-tenant matters (including evictions), family law matters (including child custody and child support), debt collection and small claims court who do not have the benefit of paid counsel.

Historically, county law libraries are almost exclusively funded from civil court filing fees. However, due to changing methods of dispute resolution and other changing practices in civil law, including increased use of alternative dispute resolution and decreased local civil court filings, there has been a consistent downward trend in available funding for County law libraries. According to the Council for California Law Librarians, the changing civil landscape has resulted in a 40% decrease since 2009.

In Nevada County, the County Law Library is located in the main County Courthouse and shares space with the Court's Self-Help Center, creating an efficient 'one-stop resource' for the public. This resource particularly benefits self-represented and often disadvantaged individuals. In fiscal year 2016-17, over 4,369 patrons used the services of the combined resource of the Nevada County Law Library and Self-Help Center. In recent years, the Nevada County Law Library Board of Trustees discontinued many of its

print publications and replaced them with online versions of the same material. However, as a result of the continued downward funding trend, the Nevada County Law Library has been forced to further cut these electronic resources as well as hours of operation, resulting in the loss of valuable and scarce legal resources in our small rural County.

The Council for California Law Librarians has requested a line-item allocation to be included in this year's state budget as well as an ongoing budget allocation to supplement County law library budgets and restore funding to 2009 levels. While the County is not in a position to assess the amount of funding necessary to supplement the statewide county law library budgets statewide, we do support a significant increase in, and more sustainable source of, State funding to maintain and restore resources to our local County Law Library and ensure that this important local public resource can be sustained.

We appreciate your time and consideration of this important matter, and urge your support of both a one-time line-item allocation in the California State Budget for fiscal year 2018-19 and an ongoing budget allocation in the future to help supplement and restore county law library funding.

Sincerely,

Edward C. Scofield
Chair, Board of Supervisors