



SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

The Southern District of California continues to rank as one of the busiest courts in the nation. A recent judicial survey ranks the Southern District of California as the busiest court in the nation in terms of felony cases filed per judgeship and total weighted caseload. As of September 30, 1999, the Southern District had a weighted caseload of 1,029 cases filed per judge, far above the national average of 430 weighted filings per judge. This is an increase over the court's already heavy filings in 1998 of 1,006 cases per judge for fiscal year 1998. These statistics also do not take into account the recent deaths of Judge Leland C. Nielsen and Judge Edward J. Schwartz.

In July 2000, the United States Judicial Conference authorized new district court judgeship positions for the Southern District of California. The Judicial Conference authorized five permanent judgeships and three temporary judgeships. The Southern District received the highest number of new authorized judgeships based on our status as the busiest court in the nation in terms of felony cases filed per judgeship and total weighted caseload. It is imperative that Congress pass a

judgeship bill to enable the court to continue to preside over its heavy criminal

caseload.

The Southern District is comprised of San Diego and Imperial Counties and borders Mexico to the south. The Southern District includes a very active portion of the United States-Mexico border, and considerable law enforcement activity in the district focuses on the border area. The district contains three major points of entry between the United States and Mexico, and shares an approximate 200-mile border with Mexico, along which 6 million people live, comprising 60% of the total population along the entire border.

Further, with almost 2.8 million residents, San Diego County is the second largest county in the state. San Diego is projected to continue to grow rapidly in the future and is projected to be the fourth fastest growing Metropolitan Statistical Area in the nation, behind only Houston, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta. Unique to the Southern District, however, is the presence of an adjacent major foreign city, Tijuana.

According to the U.S. Customs Service, as much as 33% of the United States' illegal drugs and 50% of its cocaine are smuggled in through the Southern District of California. Law enforcement officials now refer to Imperial County as the nation's new "cocaine corridor." The drug related cases include defendants from major drug cartels, including the Arellano-Felix organization. The drug cases include drug trafficking in marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin. The incidence of

drug-related cases is expected to continue to rise substantially in the region. Additionally, the court faces a substantial number of immigration cases, with many defendants having prior convictions for aggravated felonies.

The court desperately needs additional judgeships in order to continue to preside over its heavy criminal caseload. Our senior judges are of advanced age, with one judge at 86 years old and cannot continue to preside over their heavy calendars. We need new judges to ensure that defendants are brought to trial in accord with the limitations imposed by their rights to a speedy trial.