

Hi, this is Chris Micheli, with the Sacramento governmental relations firm of Aprea & Micheli, and an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law in its Capital Lawyering Program. Today's podcast is just to take a quick look at judicial branch policymaking.

Basically, the judicial branch of state government here in California does engage in policymaking through the Judicial Council. The Judicial Council essentially provides policy for the courts in the state of California, including the Supreme Court, the Courts of Appeal, and the Superior Courts - our trial courts.

In Article VI of the state constitution, Section 4, 6, and 12, set forth the role of the Judicial Council. The Council has a guiding principle of providing leadership in the judicial branch by using a set of guiding principles while working to improve the future of the judicial branch by overcoming common fundamental challenges.

The Council has also chosen to pursue a number of goals. These include things like providing access, fairness, and diversity in our court system; ensuring independence and accountability of the judiciary; modernizing the management and administration of the state's court system; ensuring quality of justice and service to the public; and providing adequate, stable, and predictable funding to ensure a fully functioning branch of state government.

The Judicial Council has a number of ongoing programs and projects, including a strategic plan - which is intended to outline the long-range strategic goals and systematic initiatives of the judicial branch - they also provide annual legislative and budget priorities that are pursued by the Judicial Council and information related to the management of court facilities across the state of California.

The Council is made up of a number of folks and is chaired by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The Council is charged with ensuring consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice in the state of California. The Council does employ a staff to assist it, but it also relies heavily on a number of advisory bodies and task forces.

There are six internal committees of the Judicial Council. They are the Executive and Planning Committee, the Judicial Branch Budget Committee, the Judicial Council Technology Committee, the Legislation Committee, the Litigation Management Committee, and the Rules Committee. There are also more than two dozen task forces of the Council, including advisory ones on audits, providing access and fairness, looking at civil and small claims, civil jury instructions, court interpreters, court security, criminal jury instructions, family and juvenile law, information technology, trial court budget and facilities, even tribal court and state court forum, and of course looking at the workload assessment.

It should be noted that our Judicial Council has been at the forefront of many of the historical reforms in terms of the judicial administration of our state's court system, such as trial court unification - where we unified our municipal and superior courts. The Council also maintains annual reports on workload information related to the courts, their annual outlook reports, different court statistics, and legislative reports in terms of legislation/new laws that have affected the court system.

With the historical materials, the Judicial Council provides a valuable wealth of information about the state's court system, as well as its operation and administration of justice here in the state of California.

As you can see, the Judicial Council plays an important role and how it sets judicial branch policy here in the state of California.

Thanks for taking a quick look at the judicial branch policymaking activities here in the state of California.