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DA ASKS GRAY AND CANNELLA TO URGE GOVERNOR TO FILL WESTSIDE JUDGESHIPS

Merced County District Attorney Larry D. Morse II today asked state Senator Anthony Cannella and state Assemblymember Adam Gray to urge Governor Jerry Brown to fill two judicial vacancies and fund a third judgeship “that will finally allow jury trials and other expanded court services that were promised for the Westside of our county.”

Morse noted that the Robert M. Falasco Justice Center was dedicated in September of 2016 “as part of an effort to provide greater access and convenience to court services to the residents of the Westside of Merced County who have been underserved in this area for far too long. Yet 18 months after the opening of the courthouse, because of judicial vacancies, we still are no closer to being able to conduct jury trials as was originally planned and anticipated.”

“This,” Morse said, “is a continuing waste of the resources that were expended to improve access to justice and court services for the people of Los Banos, Gustine, Dos Palos and the unincorporated areas of Merced County’s Westside.” Morse noted that it has been nearly six months since the retirements of Merced County Superior Court Judges Ronald Hansen and Harry Jacobs and no new appointments have been made. Moreover, the Governor has not funded an already authorized new judicial position that would be assigned to the Falasco Justice Center. Without that new position it is unlikely a second judge would serve exclusively in Los Banos, Morse said.

“With so much of Merced County’s growing population on the Westside it is indefensible to only have one judge assigned to a brand new courthouse that was intended to be fully staffed with two judges,” Morse’s letter noted.

Morse advised both legislators that the District Attorney’s office has already expanded its staffing and facilities in order to conduct jury trials at the Falasco Justice Center, “yet we have no idea when or if such trials will commence. It is a continued hardship for Westside residents not to be able to take advantage of the convenient location of this beautiful new courthouse.”

In closing Morse noted that the advocacy of the two influential legislators “for fulfilling the promise that was made to the people of Merced County’s Westside would be greatly appreciated, as always.”