



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTIES OF BUTTE, GLENN AND TEHAMA

SELF HELP ASSISTANCE & REFERRAL PROGRAM

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ASK THE COURT

Question: Is the Court like any other County Department?

--Anonymous, Willows, CA.

Answer: The short answer is no. The courts in the 58 counties of California are now part of the state judicial branch. Local (county) funding of courts ceased in 1997 and the courts are now funded solely by the state. Neither the local Board of Supervisors or Grand Jury have jurisdiction over the court.

If you will recall your civics classes, the courts are one of the three branches of government: the executive, the legislative and the judicial. The founders of the United States believed that the three branches were necessary for the "checks and balances" of power within government. While the court partners with county departments, the court is not affiliated in any way with law enforcement, the district attorney or public defender's office, as many erroneously assume. These agencies are here to enforce the law, prosecute on behalf the people of the state of California, or defend those accused of a crime. The court must be the impartial trier of the facts.

In each of the 58 counties, the court is its own employer and its employees are not county employees. The court negotiates its own memorandum of understanding with its employee's union and has its own personnel rules that its employees are subject to. Courts like other public agencies are subject to state and federal employment laws. The court is not a quasi-military organization like law enforcement, which is subject to its own rules and regulations.

The court executive officer has overall authority for the management of the court's employees and non-judicial operations of the court. The court executive officer is under the direction of the presiding judge.

Ask the Court is written by Glenn County Superior Court administration staff. E-mail questions to askthecourt@glenncourt.ca.gov or mail to Glenn County Superior Court, Attn: Ask the Court, 526 W. Sycamore St., Willows, CA 95988. Questions may be submitted anonymously.