

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
Eastern District of California
501 I Street, Suite 3-200
Sacramento, CA 95814-7303

Chambers of
FREDRICK E. CLEMENT
Chief Bankruptcy Judge

916-930-4540

September 20, 2024

Re: Closure of Modesto Courthouse

An Open Letter to the Bar:

After consulting with the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Judicial Conference of the United States, we have decided to close the Modesto Courthouse, effective June 2025. This closure will apply to both the courtroom and to the Clerk's Office in that location.

Our decision is simply a matter of being good stewards of public funds. The Modesto Courthouse is expensive to operate and receives little usage. As technology has advanced and as the court, as well as the bar and the public, have become more comfortable with the remote appearance milieu, few persons physically appear in the Modesto Courthouse. Moreover, as Clerk of the Court, Wayne Blackwelder, has made still further options for remote filing available, there has been very little foot traffic to the Modesto Courthouse Clerk's Office. Beyond that, unlike some of our other courthouses in the district, the Modesto Courthouse is rented space. Between the rent and additional staffing, the Modesto Courthouse annually costs the judiciary, and ultimately taxpayers, deep into six figures, as measured thousands of dollars, and perhaps as much as seven figures.

In recent years, the Modesto Courthouse has served cases arising from Calaveras, Tuolumne, and/or Stanislaus Counties. Sometime prior to June 2025, we will decide how to assign existing and new cases arising from one of these three counties to either the Sacramento Courthouse, Fresno Courthouse, or perhaps to divide them between those courthouses. We will keep you informed about ongoing developments.

Wayne Blackwelder and I have been working to offer our loyal employees working out of the Modesto Courthouse a soft-landing. We will offer a liberal work-from-home policy for an extended period and, after that, allow employees to re-designate their duty station to either Sacramento or Fresno.

We, the collective bankruptcy bench, are interested in hearing from you about this change. Though the decision to close the Modesto Courthouse has been made, perhaps there are implementation concerns or suggestions you would like to share. Please send your comments to me in writing. You may do so either (1) by letter addressed to Fredrick E. Clement, Chief Judge, United States Bankruptcy Court, 501 I Street, Suite 3-200, Sacramento, CA 95814; or (2) if you prefer, particularly for shorter comments, by sending an email to PublicComments@caeb.uscourts.gov. If you are comfortable, please do provide your name and telephone number; frequently, we have follow-up questions or comments that we would like to discuss.

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with you. I will personally be sure that your comments are brought to the attention of each member of the bench and that your views are considered.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "F. E. Clement", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fredrick E. Clement
Chief Judge, U.S. Bankruptcy Court