



Supreme Court of Georgia

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SUPREME COURT JUSTICES TO BE FURLOUGHED

Atlanta, September 2, 2009 – Chief Justice Carol Hunstein announced today that Georgia’s Supreme Court justices have volunteered to take three furlough days between now and the end of the calendar year. All other court staff also will be furloughed three days. Although the state Constitution prohibits the lowering of judges’ salaries, it does not prohibit them from voluntarily returning a portion of their own pay.

“In taking this action, we in the judicial branch join with leaders of the other two branches of government in responding to the state’s budget crisis,” Chief Justice Hunstein said.

In response to previous budget-balancing measures, the state’s highest court already reduced staff last year by 10 percent and cut its budget by 11.32 percent. The personnel reductions mean that Georgia’s Supreme Court today has fewer employees than it had a decade ago. Yet, the workload has grown exponentially. In the last year alone, death penalty appeals to this court more than doubled, as did other categories of appeals. Due to this growing workload, despite the furloughs, the Clerk’s Office will remain open with reduced staff, at the Justices’ request.

“Frugality is nothing new to this court,” the Chief Justice said. “We have consistently done everything we could to meet the Governor’s requests, while fulfilling our constitutional mandates to hold court and deliver justice to the citizens of this state. We remain faithful stewards of the taxpayers’ dollars.”

Unlike state agencies, the Georgia Supreme Court has no programs to cut and a very small staff to begin with. However, in addition to furloughs, the high court will take a number of steps to reduce its Fiscal Year 2010 budget by 5 percent. Among other steps, it will:

- Close down its judicial library, used by staff to research the law;
- Give up a floor of office space and double up staff in smaller quarters;
- Eliminate two positions in the office of the Reporter of Decisions, charged with publishing all Supreme Court decisions in formal and official form; and in a last-ditch effort
- Return leased copy machines.