

Calif. poised to change traffic ticket payments

By Christopher Cadelago, Sacramento Bee

California court officials plan to let those with traffic tickets across the state appear in court without paying up front.

The new rule, expected to win approval from the state Judicial Council at a special telephone meeting Monday, is viewed by policymakers as a preliminary move in a broader effort to expand access to the court system.

It was spearheaded by Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, who pushed for the change on an urgency basis in response to concerns about disparities in how courts notify defendants and handle bail when someone challenges a citation in court.

While many counties, including Sacramento, San Francisco and Los Angeles, generally do not require payment to contest a ticket, some do. Marin County, for example, tells motorists they must post the full bail, considered a guarantee of appearance, before a trial date will be set. El Dorado County requires motorists to first post bail, according to its website. If found not guilty, motorists are refunded the amount in four to six weeks.

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