

MEDIA RELEASE

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FRESNO COUNTY SAYS JAIL CONSENT DECREE IS FULFILLED AND EXPIRED

FRESNO, CA – In a letter to the Prison Law Office dated May 27, 2026, the County of Fresno formally stated its position that the 2015 Consent Decree relating to management of the County Jail is finished, and the County is meeting or exceeding the Consent Decree's requirements.

The Consent Decree was originally established to resolve a class action lawsuit (Hall v. Fresno County) brought on behalf of individuals incarcerated in the County jail. Its purpose was to ensure the County's jail facilities, medical care, mental health services and inmate safety practices met the minimum standards required under the U.S. Constitution and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Since 2015, Fresno County has invested significant time, attention, and resources—costing more than \$300 million—to significantly improve constitutionally compliant health and mental health care. Although Fresno County met or exceeded the Consent Decree requirements, the cost of contracted medical and behavioral health services, through the County's contracted medical provider, CFMG/WellPath, has increased dramatically. The 2026 fiscal year contract alone is \$42 million. Unfortunately, despite the County's progress and significant investment, the Prison Law Office is demanding more with no clear end in sight.

These rapidly escalating costs, combined with the shifting and often inconsistent demands by the Prison Law Office and similar law firms, have placed an unfair and unsustainable burden on counties. Local governments across California are already facing reductions in both federal and State funding—resources that are vital for supporting public safety, agriculture, disaster prevention and response, as well as human and health services for law-abiding residents.

The County maintains the jail has met, and in many areas exceeded, the obligations outlined in the Consent Decree and its remedial plan provisions. However, the Prison Law Office still alleges that the County is failing to comply with its legal obligations.

"It's outrageous the County faces such allegations when it has gone above and beyond its duty to provide high quality medical treatment and services to its jail inmate population. Ironically, the State's realignment in AB 109 placed the burden on our law-abiding taxpayers by transferring thousands of felony-convicted inmates from State prisons to county jails that were designed for short-term stays and low-level offenders," stated Chairman Garry Bredefeld. "Despite the State's shift to counties, Fresno County has gone above and beyond what is constitutionally required."

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