



SONOMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

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Cynthia L. Moore • *Director*

Jeanne M. Miskel • *Chief Child Support Attorney*

August 20, 2003

To: The Honorable Allan Hardcastle
Presiding Judge
Sonoma County Superior Court

1566
MT 8/27/03
SEP 09 2003
GRAND JURY

Enclosed is the required response of the Sonoma County Child Support Services Director to Recommendation-R1 in the 2002-2003 Grand Jury Report entitled "Enforcing Child Support Payments," Pages 41 through 43.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding my response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia L. Moore".

Cynthia L. Moore
Child Support Services Director
County of Sonoma

Cc: The Honorable Mark Tansil
Supervisor Paul Kelley
Supervisor Valerie Brown
Supervisor Mike Kerns
Supervisor Tim Smith
Supervisor Mike Reilly
Mike Chrystal, County Administrator
Denise Gordon, Court Executive Officer
Eeve T. Lewis, County Clerk

SONOMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES
RESPONSE TO THE 2002/2003 GRAND JURY REPORT

ENFORCING CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS, Page 41

RECOMMENDATION, Page 43 (R1)

All agencies involved with child-support collections should pressure the California State Legislature to reduce the interest collected on default child-support payments to a more equitable amount.

RESPONSE: The recommendation has not yet been implemented.

The Child Support Services Director will advocate through the California Child Support Directors Association (CSDA), and in cooperation with the State Department of Child Support Services, for reform of California law that pertains to interest charged in cases with default child support orders during the 2003/2004 State Fiscal Year.

#1596

Sonoma County Superior Court

Hall of Justice, Room 223-J
600 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, California 95403

Cynthia A. Denenholz
Commissioner

(707) 565-2461

August 28, 2003

BT
9/8/03

Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury, 2002-2003
P.O. Box 5109
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Attn: James Simpson, foreperson

Dear Mr. Simpson:

As you are aware, the 2002-2003 Sonoma County Grand Jury reviewed the operations of the Sonoma County Department of Child Support Services. The recommendation of the resulting report, "Enforcing Child Support Payments", was that, "All agencies involved with child-support collections should pressure the California State Legislature to reduce the interest collected on default child-support payments to a more equitable amount." (Final Report, Sonoma County Grand Jury, 2002-2003, p. 43) I was identified as the "Commissioner of Child Support Services", one of those required to respond to the recommendation.

I am a judicial officer, a commissioner of the Superior Court of California, County of Sonoma. As such, I am neither an elected county officer nor head of an agency for which the Grand Jury has responsibility, and therefore not an appropriate person from whom to require a response to a Grand Jury recommendation. (See Penal Code section 933) More importantly, advocating for a reduction of the interest rate charged with regard to certain child support orders would undoubtedly "... cast reasonable doubt on [my] ability to act impartially." (Cal. Code of Judicial Ethics, Canon 4A(1)) All judicial officers are admonished to avoid political activity that may create the appearance of bias or prejudging with respect to issues that could later come before the judicial officer. (Cal. Code of Judicial Ethics, Canons 3E & 5D) My advocacy for a revision to the interest rate charged on child support arrears could create such an appearance when issues concerning interest are raised in my courtroom.

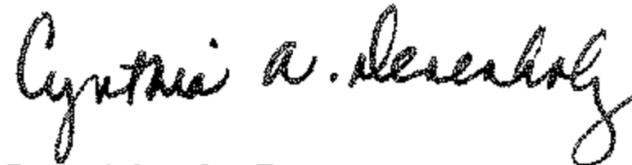
For these reasons, I respectfully decline to respond to the substance of the Grand Jury's recommendation. I will point out, however, that the March 2003, report, "Examining

Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury, 2002-2003
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Page Two

Child Support Arrears in California: The Collectibility Study”, includes lowering the interest rate charged on arrears as one of its twenty-three recommendations for stopping the “alarming” increase of child support arrears in this state; this report was mandated by the California legislature and prepared by the Urban Institute. Some of the study’s recommendations were enacted into law this month in Assembly Bill 1752. While an interest rate reduction was not among them, it may be the subject of future legislation. The Department of Child Support Services, advocacy groups, or legislators may have information useful to you in this regard.

Thank you for your concern regarding child support issues.

Respectfully yours,



Cynthia A. Denenholz

cc: Board of Supervisors, c/o Clerk of the Board
Hon. Allan D. Hardcastle, Presiding Judge