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February 27, 2008

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Re: Access to California Supreme Court Oral Argument

Dear Presiding Justices:

The California Academy of Appellate Lawyers requests that you make audio transcripts of appellate arguments available to the public on the courtinfo.ca website. Our primary reasons for the request are the usefulness to practitioners, the inherent virtue of transparency, and the monetary savings to people who are interested in specific cases.

At the same time we are making this request, we have asked the Chief Justice to consider making live and archived video of California Supreme Court arguments available to the public. If the Supreme Court acts favorably on that request, we would also hope the Court of Appeal – at least the districts and divisions that share courtrooms with the Supreme Court – make its arguments available by the same means. As reported in my letter to the Chief Justice, California is in a minority of fewer than one-third of the states in offering neither live nor archived electronic access to arguments in its highest court. Although I did not survey the practices of other

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states' intermediate appellate courts, I know from personal experience that most if not all federal circuit courts of appeals provide free access to audio archives. A copy of the Academy's letter to the Chief Justice is enclosed.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Very truly yours,

Charles A. Bird  
President

cc: Hon. Ronald M. George  
Chief Justice of California

Encl.