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## **Kentucky's county attorneys face large budget cuts; possible lay-offs**

(Frankfort, Ky.) -- Due to state budget cuts, Kentucky's county attorneys face cutting more than \$1.1 million dollars from their budgets over the next six months.

"These budget reductions are the equivalent of 77 staff members losing their jobs effective Jan. 1," said Christian County Attorney Mike Foster, a member of the Prosecutors Advisory Council and current president of the Kentucky Association of Counties.

Gov. Steve Beshear has asked state agencies to trim their budgets by four percent for the last half of the current state fiscal year – Jan. 1 through June 30, 2009.

County attorneys have already suffered significant budget cuts during the past six months, including salary cuts for their staffs, but the new cuts from the Governor will result in additional personnel reductions, Foster said. Considering all cuts, Foster added, the effective cuts for county attorneys' staff salaries are equivalent to a 15.8 percent reduction for the balance of the fiscal year.

"These budget cuts will have a dramatic and devastating effect on the ability of County Attorneys to prosecute crime, protect victims of child abuse and domestic violence, and prosecute DUI offenders," Foster said.

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He also stated that it will be impossible to cover all court assignments, such as traffic court, family court, criminal court, mental health commitments, disability hearings, and jury trials. Foster called the reductions “devastating” to Kentucky’s system of public safety and criminal justice.

He also predicts a snowball effect if jobs are eliminated. The loss of 77 jobs will require additional reductions to pay for the costs of unemployment benefits, he explained. The additional costs of unemployment benefits could raise the lay-off equivalent to 101 staff positions, Foster said.

To meet budget reductions, county attorneys will be forced to either lay off employees or implement furloughs, Foster said, and that will mean prosecutors must close their offices on selected days.

In addition to current cuts in this first year of the state’s two-year budget plan, county attorneys, and other state agencies, face additional budget cuts in July 2009 for the second year of the budget biennium. The current two year budget plan calls for a flat line allocation of funds for the plan’s second year.

Brucie Moore, Union County Attorney and current President of the Kentucky County Attorney’s Association, stated that the budget reductions for Kentucky’s prosecutors “has truly reached a crisis in terms of public protection and the prosecution of criminals, in our job. We touch every aspect of the community,” she said. “It may be a juvenile issue in the school or a family situation such as child abuse or domestic violence. It could even be the next door neighbor”.