

Bristol Probate Court

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February 2, 2010

Hon. Paul J. Knierim
Hon. Dianne E. Yamin
Hon. Joseph D. Marino
Probate Administration
186 Newington Road
West Hartford, CT 06110-2320

Re: Budget Committee

Dear Judge Knierim, Judge Yamin and Judge Marino,

With due respect to the tremendous work that lays ahead of you as you work through the legislative mandates toward consolidation of the Probate Court system. I realize the tough decisions that will confront you all. I am cognizant of the tight economies of time and funding compounding the multitude of issues before your committee.

Due to maintain minimal staffing levels necessary in our Court as the Budget Committee meetings conflict with Court Business hours, I am unable to attend the February 3, 2010 meeting, although two of my Bristol colleagues will be able to attend. I send this letter in lieu of my attendance.

In many Courts throughout the State of Connecticut the Clerks and Court staff have been silenced from vocalizing their opinions and their needs and desires as to what should happen to the Probate Courts from their unique perspective for many reasons, mostly fear of losing their positions or fear of embarrassing their Judges. Silence from Court staff should not be construed as acquiescence to the proposals of the Committee. Few will speak up and that is understandable. Please be aware that the majority of Clerks and Court staff are not happy with the current situation. It is not just a "handful" of Clerks and Court staff who are upset. Your Committee needs to take that in to consideration.

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The Officers of the Clerks Association, namely Mary M. MacGregor, President and Marianne Arancio Stilson, Vice- President have done yeoman's work in assisting your Committee. They should be applauded for their efforts on behalf of the Clerks and Court staffs. I personally am very grateful to them.

Bottom Line, we respectfully ask for equity in salaries and benefits and health insurance with our fellow Clerks and Court staff of the Connecticut Judicial Branch. We respectfully ask that the statutes, such as higher health care premiums and Retirement contributions C.G.S.: 45a-44 that makes distinctions between the Probate Branch employees and the Judicial Branch employees be proposed to be changed through the Legislature. We ask for clarification as to who our employer will be- will it be Probate Administration or the Judge of the Court? If we work for the Judge of the Court that we are employed by, then, we ask for Legislative abandonment of the inappropriate and offensive language of C.G.S.: 45a-21... "shall serve at the **"pleasure"** of the judge..." An appropriate substitute would be Probate Court employees shall be deemed employees of the Judge of the Court of Probate in which they are employed. We respectfully ask for clarification and consistency in the answer as to what constitutes a 40 hour work week. At what point, will it be recognized in the form of compensation as to the duties of the managerial and supervisory functions performed by the Chief Clerks/ Clerks of each Court? At what point, will years of service be considered in this compensation benefits package?

I thank you for your attention in reviewing this letter. I urge you to take the next right action of behalf of Clerks and Court staff that are the backbone of the State of Connecticut Probate Court system. I wish you well as you proceed with the future work of the Committee.

Very Truly Yours,



Anne C. Holihan, Esq.
Chief Clerk of the Court
Senior Staff Attorney