

# Probate Court - District of New Milford - Bridgewater

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Martin F. Landgrebe  
*Judge*

Marianne Arancio Stilson  
*Chief Clerk*

February 1, 2010

The Honorable Paul J. Knierim  
Chief Court Administrator  
Probate Administration  
186 Newington Road  
West Hartford, CT 06110

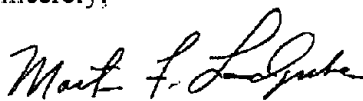
The Honorable Diane E. Yamin  
Probate Judge Danbury  
Town Hall  
155 Deer Hill Avenue  
Danbury, CT 06810

The Honorable Joseph D. Marino  
Probate Judge Middletown  
94 Court Street  
Middletown, CT 06457

Dear Judge Knierim, Judge Yamin and Judge Marino:

I want to first thank the members of the Committee for taking on this important challenge. I feel that I must address some of the issues that the Committee is in the process of deciding that will effect the lives of so many dedicated and loyal employees, of not only the judges but of the probate court system and the public they serve. Many of the clerks, including my own, have been with the system for over ten years. Following the mandated consolidation, many clerks will continue to be employed by the same judges who originally hired them. I feel that I must address that while "...*serving at the pleasure of the Probate Judge.*" under P.A. 09-114 strips the Probate Judges of all authority except to hire and fire staff, I strongly advocate that it is important that this Committee grandfather the benefits including vacation, sick and personal leave for any employee with more than ten years of service unless their current benefits are less than the Budget Committee approves. In addition, all employees should be eligible to bank their benefits for future use. I urge you to recall that many current probate employees left their former positions to work for their judge in the probate court system. Their current benefits were the result of employment negotiations. Why should they now have to begin again as if their years of dedicated service counted for nothing? Why should employees at Probate Administration have benefits that our staff does not presently have? It is clear that the input of probate court employees was never considered during the legislative process. I feel that probate court employees were never given the opportunity to provide their input during the legislative process. They still are not represented on any committee that is deciding their future and thus, Probate Court employees have been unjustifiably left out in the cold. I know that many of my fellow Judges feel as I do, that if not for the professionalism and experience of our court staff, we would be unable to provide the high level of service that the citizens of Connecticut have grown to demand of the probate system. While I agree that a standardization of benefits should be put into place by the Committee for any new hires of the probate system beginning in 2011, I strongly urge you to allow our employees to continue to receive the benefits we individually negotiated when they were hired. In light of their collective contributions to the system they deserve no less.

Sincerely,



Martin F. Landgrebe  
Probate Judge