

**Court of Probate, District of Cheshire
(203) 271-6608**

**Raymond F. Voelker
Judge**

**84 South Main Street
Cheshire, CT 06410**

March 10, 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
984 Court Street
Middletown, CT 06457

Dear Judge Knierim, Judge Yamin and Judge Marino:

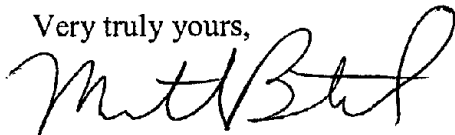
Action speaks louder than words. Such a simple statement, but how true it is. I am hopefully speaking for all my fellow colleagues when I make these statements. We truly are the backbone of the Probate Court system. We deal with very difficult issues with the public everyday. We deal with the tears, the hurt, the anger, the grief on a daily basis. We try to comfort and help as well as guide the public through very difficult times in there lives. We deal with the loss of loved ones, families dealing with making decisions to conserve a loved one, Moms and Dads dealing with issues of mentally challenged children who are becoming adults, mental commitments, paternity issues and all the heated issues that sometimes go along with these matters on top of the emotional ones. We also input all applications into the computer, set matters down for hearings, and deal with numerous phone calls from the public and Attorneys. We also deal with all forms and requests from Probate Administration that need to be completed and returned. We attend seminars and go to continuing education. These are all part of our jobs. Finally, "action" not words were taken in 2007 when a salary study was done to bring salaries in line with our duties. Sadly, some colleagues were given their due, while others were once again left behind, but since the study was in place we all knew that we had something on the horizon. But again, in January 2010 the previous action of good faith was dismissed when the appendix to the original pay plan was revealed. Now a clerk of the Courts original pay plan of 108 was lowered to a 107, a Probate Court Officer, and a

Probate Court Deputy Clerk (who previously were a 107) was raised to a 108. So now, the "action" has been withdrawn and we again hear only words.

It is unfortunate that MAG does not have a lot of experience with the Probate system and as such has deemed this position to be considered with Probate Staff, but these positions are only in the Regional Children's Court. Probate Court officers were a newly formed position. They deal only with Children matters, only with specific case files. They do not process applications, set down hearings, deal with the general public, or do any part of a clerks job. So now, my colleagues and I who have been here for 10-25 plus years, with all our experience and knowledge are in a lower pay scale than a new position that does not even work or have any experience in a Probate Court. The Probate Court Officers only deal with Children matters. I am not belittling their job by any means, but there is no comparison to Probate Court staff and PCO's. They should be in a separate category.

So as I began this letter," Actions speak louder than words". I think we are all feeling very discouraged, unappreciated, and defeated. We have sat at meetings being told how important we are, and that we are the backbone of the system and that people depend on us. Then in the next breath, we are told we have to give up vacation, not have raises and no incentives of added retirement benefits. We are told we are not state employees and that we are not part of the Judicial. So then why did we have to follow the State of Connecticut policy of wage freeze? Please I ask you as the committee to not allow the change of the clerks category. I think we have already given up enough.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margherita Bergstrand', written in a cursive style.

Margherita Bergstrand
Clerk of the Cheshire Probate Court