

Good Afternoon, members of the Budget Committee and Judge Barbara Quinn, Chief Court Administrator:

I am Marianne Arancio Stilson, the Chief Clerk of the New Milford Bridgewater Probate Court and the Vice President of the Clerk's Association.

My phone has been ringing off the hook involving our salaries. Since there seems to be more unanswered questions than answers it was difficult, if not impossible to address this issue intelligently. Since this issue was not addressed and is of vital importance to everyone, I will touch on some of the members concerns.

For those of us on salaries, we want confirmation from this committee that if we are asked to work more hours by our judges, that we will be compensated at our current rate of pay, for those additional hours and our salaries would reflect that increase. I think this confusion exists with the judges as well as with the clerks. I am hearing that some are expecting their employees to work more hours for the same pay, take it our leave it. This would be unacceptable and unfair and I hope this committee will see the inequity in this situation and be sure it is addressed and remedied.

We need to know who will be calling the shots on salaries. Is it the budget committee? Is it the judges? Is it probate administration? Although we have been assured that our pay from December 2008 will be the deciding factor if we do not get a raise this year, who will be in charge of increasing those employees who are making below the salary ranges? Is that a mandatory increase? Who will be in charge of deciding the salary within the range? There are more questions here than answers for both the clerk's and the judges. We hope that our judges will continue to have the flexibility within the salary range to make salary decisions. Please address this.

I have also heard a lot about the Chief Clerk I, II, III positions. Although the Clerk's have come to accept these categories, they still believe there should be only one title, Chief Clerk. They strongly believe that there should only be one salary range for all three titles. Since the Chief Clerk III position will have Deputy Clerk's, Attorney Clerk's and more staff at their side, they should not also benefit from a hire salary range. Combining the salary range for all three titles would be a fair compromise for the Clerk's and would address that concern. Some Clerk's in smaller courts are also attorneys and this would help them also. We would hope that this committee will take that into consideration and adopt one salary range for the Chief Clerk I, II and III positions.

Another issue is that present court staff is being asked to perform many more tasks in their courts to prepare for consolidation over and above their daily duties. The clerk's feel that they should receive an increase in their salaries and that this increase should carry over to 2011. Remember, we have been working at the same salary since 2008. Many do not know if they will have jobs in January due to the election process, consolidation as well as the staffing levels approved by this committee. I see that some judges who are not running for reelection are already shutting down. I would hope that an increase in salary will help the clerk's to keep going even though they know that their fate is unknown. We also feel that the Clerk's should be offered overtime

pay for work done over 40 hours a week. Getting the work done, whatever that work will be, is an important piece of the consolidation process. Without accurate work product, garbage in is garbage out. Give them some incentive to tackle the hard work ahead for all courts. I can already predict that the surviving courts will have a lot of work ahead of them come January 2011 without having to do the work that should have been done by the merging court before consolidation. Please consider a raise in pay for all in 2010.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not address again the fact that just because you don't see all 300 plus in attendance at your meetings or writing letters or making phone calls to the committee that you realize and take into consideration that because we work at the pleasure of our judges, those with a voice and some days a very loud voice are speaking to us and begging us to help. These employees are afraid of either being fired or come time for the consolidation, not being hired again. Please remember that like Verizon, there are a lot of people behind me and Mary who you will never see.

Thank you again, as always for your time and your assistance.