



Senator Toni Harp  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 2700  
Hartford, CT 06106

Representative John C. Geragosian  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 2702  
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Dan Debicella  
Ranking Member, Appropriations  
Committee  
Senate Republican Office  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 3400  
Hartford CT, 06106

Representative Craig Miner  
Ranking Member, Appropriations  
Committee  
House Republican Office  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 4200  
Hartford, CT 06106

February 22, 2010

Dear Chairwoman Harp, Chairman Geragosian, Ranking Member Debicella and Ranking Member Miner:

Thank you very much for providing me with the opportunity to appear before you at the February 9 Public Hearing on the Governor's Budget Adjustments, along with my colleague, Jonathan Stock. The Southern New England Law Librarians Association (SNELLA) has communicated formally with your Committee, in May and December of last year, to express our deep concern with budget cuts to the Judicial Branch that now threaten closure of six courthouse libraries in our state. These courthouse libraries serve to meet a diverse range of legal research needs. The physical collections and online services available through these libraries, as well as the professional knowledge and expertise of law librarians, contribute to making Connecticut's court law libraries essential partners in the delivery of justice.

Working with our parent organization, the American Association of Law Libraries, we posted online petitions in mid-January to oppose the closure of five of these libraries that have been signed by approximately 1140 citizens of our state. Each of these libraries, as you will see below and in the list of signatories to the attached petitions, plays a central role in the courthouse and is heavily used and valued by the local citizenry. Last year, Judicial Branch libraries received 480,000 web visits, 250,000 walk-in visits, and answered a total of approximately 42,000 reference questions. These statistics demonstrate that court law libraries are essential for providing local access to key materials to their constituencies, including the judiciary, corporate and government attorneys, solo practitioners, average citizens and the indigent. Each of them is also unique.

- **Bridgeport:**

The proposed closure of the Bridgeport Superior Court Library, located in a facility dating back to 1877, is especially alarming because, with the planned closure of the Milford Superior Court Library, there will be a gap of 41 miles between the two remaining public law libraries, Stamford and New Haven. Library users depend upon Bridgeport's current and historic legal materials in all formats, and they value the court librarians for their unique knowledge and expertise. Less affluent self-represented patrons, reflecting a large portion of the city's demographic population, will not be able to travel the long distance to another public law library and will be disenfranchised. According to Edward F. Czepiga, II, President-elect of the Greater Bridgeport Bar Association, *"The loss of the Bridgeport Superior Court Law Library would be a significant and overwhelming loss to the Bridgeport Community, the Fairfield County Judicial District, its Judges, lawyers and litigants."*

- **Hartford:**

The proposed closure of the Hartford Superior Court Library is of concern because Hartford has the largest caseload in the state, as well as the highest number of judges assigned to its judicial district. Alternatives simply cannot replace this courthouse library. The University of Connecticut Law School is geographically remote from the courthouse. The Connecticut State Library Law Legislative Reference Unit serves multiple constituencies and has been hard hit by the loss of experienced staff from the 2009 Retirement Package. In addition, budget cuts have forced the State Library to reduce hours and close on Mondays.

- **Litchfield:**

The proposed closure of the Litchfield Superior Court Library will mean that its citizens will live in the only county in the state that does not have access to a public law library. It will also negatively impact those who live outside the county who have legal matters pending in the Litchfield Superior Court. According to M. Katherine Webster-O'Keefe, President of the Litchfield County Bar Association, *"Removing the limited library we have will impose an enormous hardship upon the lawyers, their clients, the self-represented litigants and upon the judges that hear their cases. We need continued access to a local law library."*

- **Milford:**

Ms. Tara J. Galbo, Esq., President of the Milford Bar Association, eloquently describes the importance of the Milford Superior Court Library as follows: *"While the computer access age of Internet information gives many benefits to practitioners, it is absolutely no replacement for the resources of the physical library. The staff librarian provides hands on research assistance to lawyers and the public alike for legal questions of all kinds. While our members are computer research savvy, they value the actual holding of a physical book in their hands when reviewing or investigating a law or issue. To remove this option is to do more than modify research practices; it is to teach the new generation that the books are not useful or essential."*

- **Norwich:**

The proposed closure of the Norwich Superior Court Library is of great concern because, with the planned closure of the Willimantic Superior Court Library, there will be a gap of 48 miles between the two remaining public law libraries in eastern Connecticut, New London and Putnam. According to Joe Selinger, President of the New London County Bar Association, *"The*

*law library at the Norwich court house is a critical resource for both lawyers and members of the public. Because of the high cost of legal materials, including on-line services, the court library is often the only place where law firms can consult a law librarian and the resources required to serve their clients. As importantly, it is an efficient resource that enables people who may not be able to afford a lawyer to find the information they need to determine their legal rights and obligations.*

Judge Quinn has been put in an intolerable position of having to make very difficult decisions as a result of the alarming cuts to the Judicial Branch's FY 2010 budget. We urge you to fully support the request Judge Quinn made during the February 9 hearing before your committee on House Bill 5018, "An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2011."

We urge you to restore the \$5.45 million she requested to the Other Expenses (OE) account for FY2010 *as soon as possible* to keep open the courthouse libraries slated for closure by April 1. In addition, we urge you to restore the \$9.5 million in OE for FY2011 which Judge Quinn also requested. This amount represents the \$7.8 million associated with "reducing OE to FY2007 levels" and a minimum of \$1.95 million to support the law libraries. Thank you very much for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Nancy Marcove  
President  
Southern New England Law Librarians' Association

cc: Judge Barbara M. Quinn, Chief Court Administrator