

Statement of Judge Barbara M. Quinn  
Chief Court Administrator  
May 29, 2009

The Judicial Branch fully recognizes the current economic crisis facing Connecticut and the difficult choices facing the Governor and the legislators. From the start, the Judicial Branch, through the leadership of Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers, has made clear its willingness to bear its share of sacrifices for the ultimate benefit of the residents that all three branches serve. During the current fiscal year, the Branch has already absorbed cuts of more than \$17 million. We have reached out repeatedly to the Executive and Legislative Branches over the past several months to keep the lines of communication open and to achieve additional savings. It is therefore with dismay that on Thursday we obtained a copy of the Governor's second proposed budget. While we had hoped to have the opportunity to discuss these cuts in advance, we were not consulted and we heard of them only after the cuts were announced.

Of particular concern to the Branch are the proposals to close six courthouses and to cut an additional \$23,000,000 over the next two years from our fixed operating expenses, most of which cannot be reduced due to contractual and legal obligations.

The proposed elimination of six courthouses represents a major restructuring of the court system in Connecticut and should be considered only after careful and thoughtful planning among all three branches. This has not occurred. Additionally, the estimated savings associated with the latest budget proposal cannot be achieved because (1) the personnel costs associated with the courthouses are 90 percent of the courthouse expenses and will continue to have to be paid, consistent with the SEBAC agreement, and (2) the Judicial Branch will continue to own and be responsible for the courthouses in question.

Access to the courts is a critical need of the public and this plan will make such access significantly more difficult. The budget proposal does not address how the thousands of cases from the proposed court closures would be absorbed into other courthouses, most of which lack sufficient space. In order to lessen the negative impact on the public, the Judicial Branch must be involved in the planning of any court consolidations.

We stand ready to work with our Executive and Legislative partners to identify practical and workable budget savings and innovative solutions, so that the Judicial Branch can continue to serve the people of Connecticut.