



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

CHAMBERS OF
BARBARA M. QUINN, JUDGE
CHIEF COURT ADMINISTRATOR

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HARTFORD, CT 06106

TO: Legislative Leaders
Chairs and Ranking Members, Appropriations Committee
Chairs and Ranking Members, Judiciary Committee

FROM: Hon. Barbara M. Quinn

RE: Impact of \$12.8 million cut to Other Expenses - Revised Letter

DATE: October 2, 2009

Thank you for your support of the Judicial Branch and specifically for exempting Judicial from the additional Other Expenses (OE) cut to 2007 levels. This amount of \$7.8 million is unrealistic when you consider that it is in addition to \$5 million already slated to be cut from OE. It is unfair because it is disproportionate to the percentage of cuts applied to Executive Branch agencies. In fact, the Judicial Branch's share of the cut is an astounding 28% of the total statewide cut. Further, this cut is contrary to the legislative intent.

I also wanted to follow up on the e-mail that I sent to you last week regarding this issue. The \$12.8 million cut in OE is simply not achievable, as most of the expenses are fixed and cannot be cut due to contractually binding obligations. If this cut stands, we will have no choice but to drastically reduce expenditures wherever we can. This will reduce or eliminate important programs. Even when we implement these cuts, there appears to be no way to avoid a substantial deficiency in OE, which we cannot do without OPM's approval.

A \$12.8 million cut to OE will result in courthouse closings and cuts to important programs.

1. Closing courthouses

The planning to close three courthouses has begun. More may be required in the future. We will cancel leases to certain buildings and transfer the existing cases to buildings that are owned by the state. This is currently only possible in three locations but will not result in immediate lease savings. Some immediate savings, however, will be realized by closing the courthouses because the costs associated with building maintenance and utilities will be reduced.

The following three courthouses will be closed:

- a) The present Willimantic Juvenile Court building which is a leased-facility will be closed and the business will be moved to a smaller Judicial Branch-owned building located at Valley Street in Willimantic.
- b) The present GA court business will be moved out of Bristol to the New Britain Judicial District Courthouse.

c) The present leased Norwalk Juvenile Court building will be closed; the juvenile business will be moved to the present Norwalk GA Court location; and the present Norwalk GA court business will be moved to the Stamford Judicial District Courthouse.

2. New and existing programs will be reduced or delayed

a) To try to reach this unachievable cut in OE, many costs currently in the Branch's OE line item will need to be shifted to the Other Current Expenses (OCE) line items. In particular, more than \$7 million in costs associated with Juvenile Detention Centers, including more than \$5 million in medical and other direct care expenses for children, will need to be shifted out of OE. This would bring the accounting for the Judicial Branch's programs in line with Executive Branch agencies, many of whose OCE accounts are not subject to the statewide OE cuts. But in doing so, there will be far less money in the OCE line item to fund existing and new programs.

b) Cuts will first be made to new programs that have not yet started. For the Branch, this means that new programs associated with "Raise the Age" and Family Support Centers are in jeopardy. This is clearly contrary to the Legislature's intent, but would be unavoidable with these cuts.

c) Funding for a variety of non-budgeted organizations is passed through our OE line item. Among the following funds that will be substantially reduced from present levels are:

1) *Connecticut Bar Foundation* is slated to receive \$1.5 million in FY 2009-2010, which includes a new \$500,000, to provide legal services to the poor.

2) *Children in Placement* is currently slated to receive \$200,000 in funding.

3) The *Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV)* receives \$750,000 to fund victim service contracts including more than \$600,000 in direct services to victims of domestic violence; \$270,000 of the total is paid out of OE in FY 2010

3. Required access to legal research resources

a) Additionally, the budget that was enacted eliminated all funding for law libraries and legal research resources. This is another cut that is not sustainable. Money must be spent to ensure that up-to-date legal research resources are available for judges to carry out their constitutionally mandated functions.

b) Upwards of \$500,000 of these costs are associated with electronic subscriptions.

c) In the absence of dedicated funding, these costs will have to be shifted to OE, further compounding the OE deficiency.

Efforts are currently underway to identify all possible savings in OE. However, it is impossible to achieve savings in the amount of \$12.8 million when we are already a quarter into the fiscal year and we have contractual obligations from which we cannot unilaterally walk away. With these facts and consequences in mind, I urge you to continue to do whatever you can to ensure that the exemption in OE is maintained.