

## External Affairs Advisory Board – Draft

### Minutes of December 5, 2008

In attendance: Judge Susan Handy (chair), Judge Dennis Eveleigh, Judge Douglas Lavine and Judge Jane Scholl.

(Staffing – Attorney Melissa Farley, Attorney Stephen Ment, Attorney Nancy Porter, Attorney Adam Mauriello, Rhonda Stearley-Hebert and Jim Senich)

- I. Judge Susan Handy called the meeting to order.
- II. Judge Handy explained that the charge of the External Affairs Advisory Board is to review three areas that were included in the strategic plan developed by the Public Service and Trust Commission. These three areas are: the Speakers Bureau, *Seniors and the Law*, and the media campaign for public education. Judge Handy suggested that, rather than break the topics into three separate subgroups, that they be considered together under the umbrella of public education about the Branch. The members of the advisory board agreed.

Judge Dennis Eveleigh questioned whether the Judicial Branch should be putting on a program for seniors that focuses on subjects outside of the Branch's expertise, i.e. identity theft. Attorney Melissa Farley mentioned that a great deal of the program is devoted to issues that pertain to Probate Court – not to the Superior Court. She questioned whether the Branch should continue sponsoring the program, especially in light of the fact that the number of people attending the program has been dwindling.

Judge Handy said she doesn't believe Superior Court judges should be going out into the community to discuss probate issues, and Judge Jane Scholl said judges must be careful about crossing the line of providing legal advice. Judge Handy then asked for suggestions on how to reach the senior population. Attorney Farley suggested that perhaps local senior centers could be invited to visit their area courthouses. They could meet with a judge who could explain the process and then observe court proceedings. The Speakers Bureau could be used as well, she added.

Attorney Farley also explained that the Speakers Bureau, when designed, did not include outreach to schools. This was because the Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) has and continues to run the Court Visitation Program where an attorney is assigned from each Judicial District to arrange for court tours and also to go into the schools to discuss issues pertaining to the law and the court system. Attorney Farley suggested that the Board may want to consider extending the Speakers Bureau to schools, after consultation with the CBA. Judge Handy responded that she believes that visiting a courthouse is an excellent way to learn about the court system and that this suggestion should be explored.

Judge Douglas Lavine suggested that the Board may want to consider partnering with CT-N to develop a series of DVDs on the court system that could be used by schools as well as the general public.

Judge Handy suggested that the Board develop a program to educate high school students about the consequences of their actions, i.e. having sex with an underage girlfriend could lead to their being placed on the sex offender registry. Judges need to go into the classroom with this message, she said, adding that she knows of educators in the New London area who believe schools would be very receptive to this type of program.

Turning to the Speakers Bureau, Attorney Stephen Ment referred the group to a draft survey prepared for judges regarding the program. Judge Handy said she believes it would be useful to distribute the survey, and the other judges on the advisory board agreed.

- III. Advisory board members then discussed a draft action plan prepared by the Branch's External Affairs Division. During that discussion, Judge Scholl mentioned that the Internet now is such a big part of education and suggested that the advisory board may want to look at that area as well.

Referring to the draft action plan, Judge Handy suggested the following: That a comprehensive plan to educate all of Connecticut's residents about the courts be adopted. Judge Handy also suggested that the plan be modified so that the section regarding *Seniors & the Law* reflects the group's consensus to discontinue the current program. Judge Lavine made this motion, which Judge Scholl seconded. The advisory board unanimously adopted the modified draft action plan.

- IV. Before adjourning, the advisory board scheduled a focus group on the Speakers Bureau for Jan. 9, 2009. They also set Feb. 5 and Feb. 6, 2009, as tentative dates for a focus group of educators.
- V. The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.