



*American Association of Law Libraries*  
MAXIMIZING THE POWER OF THE LAW LIBRARY COMMUNITY SINCE 1906



December 23, 2009

The Honorable Toni Harp  
Co-Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 2700  
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable John C. Geragosian  
Co-Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 2702  
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Dan Debicella  
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 3400  
Hartford CT, 06106

The Honorable Craig Miner  
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 4200  
Hartford, CT 06106

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

On behalf of the Southern New England Law Libraries Association (SNELLA) and the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), we write to express our concern about the proposed closure of six law libraries and three other court facilities in Connecticut. The closure of these law libraries will prevent attorneys, judges and members of the public from accessing up-to-date legal materials. In addition, the closure of the courthouses will put a burden on all citizens, especially disenfranchised individuals who may lack transportation options. While we understand the dire budgetary circumstances that the state currently faces, it is essential that these law libraries and courthouses remain open. They are irreplaceable.

SNELLA represents more than 125 law library personnel from Connecticut, Rhode Island and Southern Massachusetts. SNELLA is a chapter of AALL, a nonprofit educational organization with over 5000 members nationwide. AALL members serve the information needs of the legal community and the public at more than 1900 academic, firm, state, court and county law libraries nationwide. AALL's mission is to promote and enhance the value of law libraries, to foster law librarianship and to provide leadership and advocacy in the field of legal information and information policy.

On May 18, we sent you a letter opposing language in HB 6365, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2011, that would have eliminated funding for print and electronic resources for all Judicial Branch law libraries in FY 2010 and FY 2011.

We have recently learned that the Executive Branch has cut \$12.9 million in the budget for the Judicial Branch, forcing the closure of the six law libraries and three courthouses. On November 18, Chief Court Administrator Judge Barbara M. Quinn testified before your Committee about the need to restore \$7.8 million to the Judicial Branch's budget. We support this request and a number of other recommendations in Judge Quinn's testimony, including that your Committee restore funding of up to \$1.5 million in the Judicial Branch's General Fund Equipment account in order to maintain updated legal research tools.

There are those who believe that Google and others who now offer free online access to a limited number of legal resources in some way replace the valuable print and online collections available at law libraries. Nothing could be further from the truth. The “collections” of legal materials Google and others are making freely available are not comprehensive; the legal resources are not *official*; and they do not replace the official legal materials that law libraries make permanently available to meet the legal research needs of the bench, the bar, and the public.

Last year alone, Connecticut’s Judicial libraries received 480,000 web visits, 250,000 walk-in visits, and staff answered a total of approximately 42,000 reference questions. These statistics demonstrate that court law libraries are unique and essential. Legal researchers in Connecticut rely heavily on the court law libraries for access to current and historic legal materials in all formats and on court law librarians for their knowledge and expertise. Access to updated legal resources is vitally important to attorneys, members of the public and especially pro se litigants, who rely on law libraries to gain access to legal materials to defend themselves in court. The court law librarians understand the difficult budgetary situation the state faces and have already made every effort to cut costs wherever possible, including by implementing shared licensing agreements to save money on online subscriptions.

While we understand the difficult circumstances that Judge Quinn faces, we believe that the six law libraries scheduled to be closed must remain open. As Judge Quinn recognized in her testimony, law libraries and electronic legal research tools, “are critically necessary for judges in their decision-making process.”

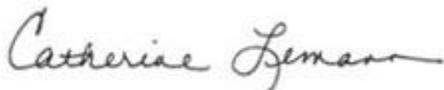
Therefore, as an alternative to the closure of the six court libraries and three courthouses, we propose that you grant Judge Quinn’s two funding requests and restore \$9.3 million to the Judicial Branch budget. In addition, we urge you to keep the six court libraries slated for closure open and staffed, even though the result would be a reduction in the library materials’ budget. We would be very happy to work with you to achieve this proposed solution.

If law libraries throughout the state cannot continue to provide access to legal resources, judges, attorneys, and the citizens of Connecticut will suffer and justice will be compromised. Thank you very much for your consideration in this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Nancy Marcove  
President  
Southern New England Law Librarians' Association



Catherine Lemann  
President  
American Association of Law Libraries

cc:

Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers

Judge Barbara M. Quinn, Chief Court Administrator

Joseph Sellinger, President, New London County Bar Association

Richard A. Roberts, President, New Haven County Bar Association

Michael Kerin, President, Milford Bar Association

Giacomo J. Guarnaccia, President, Windham County Bar Association