



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

**SNELLA** Southern New England  
Law Librarians Association

December 23, 2009

The Honorable M. Jodi Rell  
Executive Office of the Governor  
State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Governor Rell:

On behalf of the Southern New England Law Librarians Association (SNELLA) and the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), we write to express our deep concern about the recent budget cuts your office has made to the Judicial Branch. Judge Barbara M. Quinn, Connecticut's Chief Court Administrator, recently testified before the Appropriations Committee that these cuts will necessitate the closure of six law libraries and three other court facilities.

The announced closures will prevent attorneys, judges and members of the public from accessing the up-to-date legal materials they need. They will especially hurt disadvantaged citizens and pro se litigants, who may be unable to access official legal resources and may struggle to travel to far-away courthouses. While we understand the dire budgetary circumstances the state currently faces, it is essential that Connecticut's public 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.

Attorneys, judges and members of the public rely on the court law libraries for access to the legal information they need. 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 compelling statistics demonstrate the unique and essential role of the court law libraries in providing access to official legal resources. 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.

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. As noted in last year's statistics, 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.

In her November 18 testimony before the Appropriations Committee, Judge Quinn asked the Committee to restore the \$7.8 million to the Judicial Branch's budget that had been removed by your office. She also requested that funding of up to \$1.5 million be restored to the Judicial Branch's General Fund Equipment account in order to maintain updated legal research tools in the law libraries.

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." Access to updated legal resources is vitally important to judges, 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.

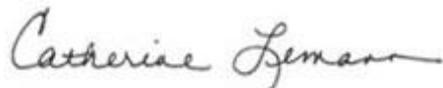
Therefore, as an alternative to the closure of the six court libraries and three courthouses, we propose that you grant Judge Quinn's two funding requests and restore \$9.3 million to the Judicial Branch budget. In addition, we urge you to keep the six court libraries slated for closure open and staffed, 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

Chief Court Administrator Judge Barbara M. Quinn