



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

**EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION**

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**Testimony of Deborah Fuller  
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing  
February 28, 2007**

**House Bill 6674, An Act Concerning the Transfer of Judicial Marshals to  
the Department of Public Safety**

Good morning. My name is Deborah Fuller and I appear before you today on behalf of the Judicial Branch to oppose **House Bill 6674, An Act Concerning the Transfer of Judicial Marshals to the Department of Public Safety.**

The Judicial Branch operates 46 courthouses across the state, comprising over 400 courtrooms and almost 3 million square feet of space. Security of the public, attorneys, jurors, judges and staff while they are in these facilities is a paramount concern. Thousands of people enter our buildings each day on matters ranging from a simple traffic offense to the most serious civil, family or criminal matter. We must do everything in our power to ensure that all of these matters can be resolved in a safe and secure manner free from disruption, violence and intimidation. We address these safety concerns in the design of our courthouses and the technology we employ. However, there is no more important element in security than a skilled, professional staff of judicial marshals. Each Judicial District has a Chief Judicial Marshal, who supervises all security operations in the district and works under the direction of the Administrative Judge for that district. The Judicial Marshals' chief responsibilities include security of prisoners in cell blocks, transporting prisoners to and from court, screening everyone who enters the buildings and securing courtrooms.

This proposal would transfer our Judicial Marshal force from the Branch to the Department of Public Safety. We are strongly opposed to this proposal because we do

not believe it will improve security in our courthouses and we are certain that it would cause confusion and duplication of effort. Judicial Marshals are thoroughly integrated into every facet of courthouse operation. To separate them out and make them part of the Executive Branch would be a major disruption to the efficient operation of our courts. Decisions on matters such as how many judicial marshals should be assigned to a particular location or courtroom on any given day must rest with the Administrative Judges, working in concert with the Chief Judicial Marshals and the Chief Clerks to assess the number and types of cases heard, as well as other circumstances that may affect security on a given day. There can be no ambiguity with respect to the lines of authority with such matters. We believe that transferring the judicial marshals to an outside entity - the Department of Public Safety - would be counterproductive.

The Judicial Branch works closely with the Department of Public Safety when we receive specific threats to courthouses. As an example, we rely on their expertise and specialized resources to assess the credibility of and response to bomb threats. In 2006, there were 37 such incidents. However, the day to day routine security matters of 46 courthouses that are open 250 days a year should remain within the purview of Branch.

As members may be aware, the function of courthouse security was transferred by the Legislature to the Judicial Branch in 2000, when the county sheriffs system was abolished. Since that time, we have made great strides in improved training and standards, increased professionalism and overall administration of the marshals. In July 2005, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) granted our Judicial Marshal Training Academy accreditation. The academy is one of only 13 such accredited academies in the United States. These improvements provide ample evidence as to why this bill would constitute a step backwards.

In conclusion, we urge the Committee not to act favorably on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.