



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
JUDICIAL BRANCH

CHAMBERS OF  
WILLIAM J. LAVERY, JUDGE  
CHIEF COURT ADMINISTRATOR

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HARTFORD, CT 06106

**Testimony of Judge William J. Lavery  
Judiciary Committee  
April 9, 2007**

**Senate Bill 1434, An Act the Compensation of Judges, Family Support Magistrates, Referees and Temporary Employees of the Judicial Branch**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the Judicial Branch regarding *Senate Bill 1434, An Act Concerning the Compensation of Judges, Family Support Magistrates, Referees and Temporary Employees of the Judicial Branch*. I would like to thank the members of the Compensation Commission of Elected Officials and Judges for their work in this area. This bill is based upon the recommendations of the Commission and I am sure that the members would be happy to provide you with a copy of their report.

The Judicial Branch fully supports Senate Bill 1434, which links the increases in judges' and family support magistrates' compensation to the average salary increase of state managers. While most state employees receive salary increases based upon established schedules, the compensation afforded to Connecticut judges and family support magistrates has been unpredictable. This bill addresses our concerns by providing raises to all judges and family support magistrates that are consistent with other state employees.

The bill specifically provides that judges and family support magistrates receive the same percentage increase that Executive Branch managers receive one

year after the salary increase became effective. So, for example, if Executive Branch managers received a 3% COLA on July 1, 2008, the judges would receive a 3% increase in their compensation effective on July 1, 2009. Alternatively, if the managers did not receive an increase, then the next year, the judges would not either.

I have attached to my testimony copies of a report prepared by the Judicial Branch entitled *Judges Salaries: A Comparative Analysis January 2007*. This report contains several charts that analyze judges' salaries from a variety of perspectives. I believe that the report illustrates very clearly that the salaries of the state's judges should be increased.

As U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John G. Roberts recently said, "Every time a potential nominee refuses to be considered, the pool of candidates from which judges are selected narrows." I believe that highly qualified attorneys who would make excellent judges will not pursue a career with the judiciary unless the compensation level is raised consistently and predictably. So, in a very real sense, this is an investment in the state's future.

I would now like to turn to another matter of great concern to the Judicial Branch, which is the hourly rate or per diem rate of compensation we pay for temporary employees. The rate paid to temporary workers is significantly lower than that of their full-time equivalents. For example, non-accredited Temporary Assistant Clerks earn 43 percent of their full-time equivalent, and non-accredited Temporary Court Reporting Monitors earn 79 percent of their full-time equivalent employees. The Judicial Branch requested funding to increase the per diem rate of temporary employees as part of the biennial budget process; however, this funding was not included as part of the recommended budget submitted this February.

Section 5 of the bill requires the Judicial Branch to increase the hourly or per diem rate of compensation for temporary employees by not less than 5% effective on July 1, 2007. We recognize the need and support efforts to increase the hourly rates of pay for these employees, but the substantial cost of doing so means that we cannot unilaterally or within available appropriations institute a pay raise. The Branch employs approximately 450 temporary employees in a wide array of positions. In fiscal year 2006, the cost to the Branch for temporary employees was \$8.7 million. Raising the hourly rates of all temporary classifications to 80% of their full-time equivalents would cost \$2.5 million more in the next fiscal year.

I urge you to support this initiative and to provide the necessary funding, as the court system could not operate without the fine men and women who serve as our temporary workers.

Thank you for the opportunity to put forth the Branch's position. We would be grateful for your support of this bill.