

THE HONORABLE DIANE S. BLICK
LITCHFIELD DISTRICT PROBATE COURT
Serving the Communities of Kent, Litchfield, Morris & Warren

Reply to:
P. O. Box 505
Litchfield, CT 06759
860-567-8065
Fax 860-567-2538

To: Members, Committee on Government Administration and Elections
State of Connecticut
General Assembly

RE: February Session, 2008

DATE: February 27, 2008

RAISED BILL No. 448
LCO No. 2221
02221 _____ GAE

AN ACT CONCERNING PROBATE JUDGES

Dear Members of the Committee:

"A judge shall uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary."

"A judge shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all of the judge's activities."

"A judge shall perform the duties of judicial office impartially and diligently."

"A judge shall so conduct all extra-judicial activities as to minimize the risk of conflict with judicial obligations."

"A judge or judicial candidate shall refrain from inappropriate political activities."

Those are just a few of the Canons of the Code of Probate Judicial Conduct but they set a very high standard by which a judge must conduct himself or herself. Even a Judge's family are held to a higher standard of conduct.

As a Probate Judge, I take those Canons seriously and strive to conduct my judicial and personal activities in accordance with those ethical standards. The very nature of being a judge brings with it stringent constraints as to civic, charitable and political activity.

But unlike Judges of the Superior, Appellate and Supreme Court, Probate Judges are *elected*. They need to go through a process of local interviews, nominations and endorsements by political party caucus or convention and an active campaign in order to win the election and be seated. It is those processes that expose Probate Judge candidates to a large number of members of our communities at large and it is the election process that costs money resulting in necessary fund raising efforts to support one's candidacy.

Inasmuch as Probate Judges "serve the public" in the community in which they must reside, it would be unreasonable to expect that campaign funds would be raised from members of the community who would NOT, eventually, have business before the Court thus creating a possible conflict of interest or question of impropriety.

I encourage the Committee to develop and pass legislation that would include the office of Judge of Probate in the Citizens' Election Program. Participation in this Program would enable candidates for Judge of Probate to fund their election or re-election campaigns without jeopardizing the integrity and impartiality of the office of Judge of Probate.

Thank you.



Diane S. Blick