

TO: THOMPSON



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF THE  
PROBATE COURT ADMINISTRATORJUDGE JAMES J. LAWLOR  
ADMINISTRATOR  
ATTORNEY THOMAS E. GAFFEY  
CHIEF COUNSEL  
HELEN B. BIENNET  
ATTORNEY  
DEBRA COHEN  
ATTORNEY188 NEWINGTON ROAD  
WEST HARTFORD, CT 06110TEL (860) 231-2442  
FAX (860) 231-1055**Court Visit Report****Probate Court, District of Thompson****Date of visit: July 6, 2007****Present at visit: Kathleen J. Murphy, Judge**

The District of Thompson serves the town of Thompson, with a population of approximately 9,000 residents. The court has a weighted workload of 616. The court does not have a clerk. The court is open to the public ~~20 hours per week~~ as follows:

Monday from 8:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
Tuesday from 8:15 a.m. to noon  
Wednesday from 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.  
Thursday from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. (Town Hall is open late)  
Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 9:15 p.m.  
Some Saturday hours

The court holds between two (2) and four (4) hearings per week. This is a decrease from the estimate of three (3) to five (5) hearings per week provided by the court during the prior year's court visit.

***Facilities***

The court is located in the Thompson Town Hall. The court is not in compliance with the facilities requirements of Connecticut General Statutes §45a-8. The court consists of one large office that serves as the judge's office, clerk's office and hearing room. The court office is adequate for small to medium sized hearings. The court has access to a private conference room to accommodate larger hearings. The town

provides a sufficient budget for office supplies and equipment as required by the statute.

### *File Review*

Files of various types were chosen at random for review. They were examined to determine whether appropriate procedures are followed, hearings and decrees are timely and reasonable follow-up is conducted.

A random review of a variety of files indicates that hearings are set in a timely manner and the court follows appropriate procedures. The court has a small caseload and regularly reviews and monitors its open files, including those on its 18-month decedents' estates list. Accordingly, the court has a low number of matters on its list.

Triennial reviews of trust, guardian of the estates' of minors and conservator files are up-to-date. Likewise, the court is up-to-date with the statutory reviews of conservator of person and guardian of persons with mental retardation files. As noted in prior court visit reports, Judge Murphy reported continuing procedural problems with older files inherited from the prior probate judge.

### *Records and Microfilming*

The Court's active files are contained in fireproof cabinets in the court office. The probate volumes are kept in the Thompson Town Clerk's vault. The vault is neat and well organized and has sufficient space for the future.

Court records are recorded on microfilm and displayed in bound volumes of roughly 350 pages. Recording is current. General recording is complete through Volume 109, page 345 and confidential volumes run through Volume 1, page 315. There are approximately 30 pages of general recording and 40 pages of confidential recording ready and waiting for microfilming. Probate volumes are signed off by the Judge as required by Probate Court Regulations.

*Summary*

The District of Thompson serves a small community. The court is required to address some children's, conservator and decedent's matters. We encourage the court to continue to follow up on older files so that all matters are kept up-to-date.

Dated: October 1, 2007

  
Debra Cohen, Attorney



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
OFFICE OF THE  
PROBATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

JUDGE JAMES J. LAWLOR  
ADMINISTRATOR  
ATTORNEY THOMAS E. GAFFEY  
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September 14, 2007

A. David Babbitt, First Selectman  
Town of Thompson  
815 Riverside Drive  
P.O. Box 899  
North Grosvenordale, CT 0606255-0899

Re: Probate Court, District of Thompson

Dear Mr. Babbitt:

Section 45a-8 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that the towns provide facilities meeting specified requirements to their probate courts. Sec. 10 of P.A. 07-184, effective July 1, 2007, requires this office to notify the judge and town(s) of any non-compliance by October 1. My office is required to inform the General Assembly's Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary of any continuing non-compliance by February 1.

The facilities of the Thompson Court do not meet the statutory requirements in one or more of the following respects:

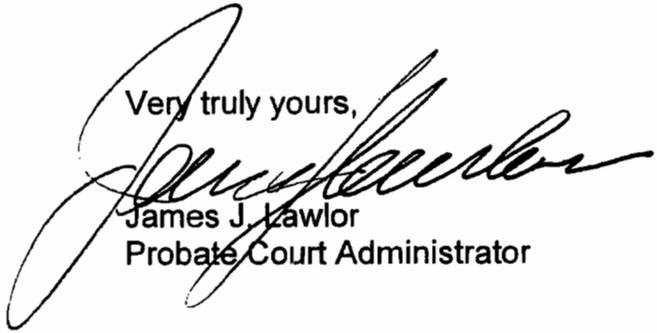
- There are not separate offices for the judge and staff, and / or
- The judge's office is not suitable for the conduct of judicial business in private and/or

I will contact you to make arrangements to meet with you and the judge so that we may review conditions at the court and discuss possible resolutions.

Please note that In accordance with the provisions of Public Act 07-184, you will need to file with this office, on or before January 1, 2008, a plan and time frame for meeting the statutory requirements.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James J. Lawlor", written in a cursive style.

James J. Lawlor  
Probate Court Administrator

cc: Hon. Kathleen J. Murphy



TOWN OF  
**THOMPSON**  
SELECTMEN'S OFFICE

MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
RIVERSIDE DRIVE  
NO. GROSVENORDALE, CT 06255  
(860) 923-9561

September 21, 2007

Judge James J. Lawlor  
Probate Court Administrator  
186 Newington Road  
West Hartford, CT 06110

***Re: Hours of the Thompson Probate Court***

Dear Judge Lawlor:

As the First Selectman of the Town of Thompson, I'd urge you to extend a waiver of §14 of P.A. 07-184 effective July 1, 2007 for the jurisdiction of Thompson so that we may continue to serve our citizens until 6:00 p.m. each and every Thursday evening.

Our Town offices are open on Thursday evening until 6:00 p.m. to better server our citizens and taxpayers. Currently we have several persons being served by Judge Murphy at this time and our Thursday evening hours have been well received. Therefore, I strongly support Judge Murphy's request for a waiver of one hour on Thursday evenings.

Sincerely,

A. David Babbitt  
First Selectman

cc: Judge Kathleen Murphy ✓  
Senator Donald Williams  
Representative Shawn Johnston  
ADB/tcl



**THOMPSON PROBATE COURT**

*Kathleen J. Murphy, Judge*

*Merc Robbins, Clerk*

*815 Riverside Drive*

*P.O. Box 74*

*North Grosvenordale, CT 06255*

*Phone (860) 923-2203*

*Fax (860) 923-9105*

September 24, 2007

Hon. James Lawlor  
186 Newington Road  
West Hartford, CT 06110

***RE: Hours of Operation***

Dear Judge Lawlor:

The office hours at Thompson Probate Court were reported to Deb Cohen, Esq., during her Court visit in Thompson on July 6, 2007. She gave verbal approval of them. They are as follows:

Monday 8:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Tuesday 8:15 a.m. to Noon

Wednesday 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Thursday 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Friday 8:15 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.

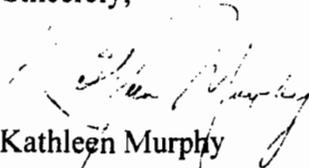
First Saturday of each month 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Other times by appointment

Although it is possible to change the Thursday hours from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Thompson Town Hall is open until 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays. Many title searchers and attorneys come into the Probate Court office to obtain information since the vault which contains the land records is open until 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays as well. Further, Thursday afternoons/evenings are the busiest time of the week, I believe, because working people have the opportunity to come to the Probate Court after they get out of work.

Based on the above, I am requesting a waiver to allow Thompson Probate Court to remain open until 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays. The people in the town of Thompson deserve flexibility and accessibility of services. Would you be so kind as to provide a written response to this request within two weeks of the date of this letter. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Murphy

Cc: First Selectman David Babbitt  
Rep. Shawn Johnston  
Sen. Don Williams



TOWN OF  
**THOMPSON**  
SELECTMEN'S OFFICE

MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
RIVERSIDE DRIVE  
NO. GROSVENORDALE, CT 06255  
(860) 923-9561

December 31, 2007

Hon. James Lawlor  
Probate Administration  
186 Newington Road  
West Hartford, CT 06110

Dear Judge Lawlor:

In an effort for Thompson to meet the statutory requirements regarding facilities as set forth in C.G. S. 5A-8 and Section 10 of P.A. 07-1780, the clerk of Thompson Probate Court shall utilize the vacant former office space used by the Veteran's Administration within Thompson Town Hall. This will result in the Judge and Clerk having separate offices, and a community room available for large hearings. This change shall be effective on January 2, 2008.

If you or any member of the Judiciary Committee have any questions, or if additional information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact First Selectman, Lawrence K. Groh Jr. at (860) 923-9561.

Sincerely,

Lawrence K. Groh Jr.  
First Selectman

Cc: Kathy Myrphy - Judge of Probate  
Shawn Johnsston -State Representative ✓

Sally White - Selectman  
Kathy Hiatt - Selectman



**THOMPSON PROBATE COURT**

*Kathleen J. Murphy, Judge*

*Merc Robbins, Clerk*

*815 Riverside Drive*

*P.O. Box 74*

*North Grosvenordale, CT 06255*

*Phone (860) 923-2203*

*Fax (860) 923-9105*

February 20, 2008

Hon. James Lawlor  
186 Newington Road  
West Hartford, CT 06110

***RE: Public Act 07-184***

Dear Judge Lawlor:

In am writing regarding the implementation of Public Act 07-184. Section 14 of the bill provides in full that:

Sec. 14 (New) (*Effective July 1, 2007*) (a) A court of probate shall be open to the public for the conduct of court business not less than twenty hours each week, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, on a regular schedule between the hours of eight o'clock a.m. and five o'clock p.m. The judge of probate of a probate district may close a court temporarily owing to inclement weather, an emergency or other good cause. Such judge shall immediately give notice of a temporary closing to the Probate Court Administrator, together with the reason for such closing and the date and time when the court will reopen.

(b) The Probate Court Administrator may, for good cause shown, modify the requirements of this section.

The Probate Court Compliance Report prepared by you was submitted to the Judiciary Committee on February 1, 2008. Inaccurate and misleading information about Thompson Probate Court was included in the Compliance Report. For example, in your Report, you indicate that Thompson Probate Court is open 19.5 hours per week, which is inaccurate. Thompson Probate Court is open to the public for twenty hours per week five days per week, which is in compliance with Public Act 07-184. When your staff attorney, Debra Cohen, visited Thompson Probate Court on July 6, 2007, which was five days after Public Act 07-184 went into effect, she issued a Court Visit Report which indicates that "the court is open to the public 20 hours per week..." A copy of Attorney Cohen's Court Visit Report is enclosed for your review.

In your Report, you indicate that Thompson Probate Court is open the first Saturday of each month from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. These two Saturday hours are

above and beyond the twenty hours per week that the Court is required to be open. The Saturday hours are to accommodate working people that are unable to access Thompson Probate Court during the regular work week. Your Report indicates that the Saturday hours are included within the twenty hours per work week requirement, which is inaccurate.

In your Report, you indicate that Thompson Probate Court is open one hour past 5:00 p.m. on Thursday evenings. Thompson Probate Court is open until 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays because Thompson Town Hall is open until 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays. Many title searchers and attorneys utilize the Probate Court office to obtain information since the vault which contains the land records is open until 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays as well. Thursday afternoons/evenings are the busiest time of the week, I believe, because working people have the opportunity to come to the Probate Court after they get out of work. The Thompson First Selectman wrote to you requesting a waiver regarding the one hour past 5:00 p.m. on Thursdays (enclosed), but did not receive a reply from you. I also wrote to you requesting a waiver regarding this additional hour on Thursdays (enclosed), but did not receive a response. In my request for a waiver, I indicated that Thompson Probate Court can close at 5:00 p.m. if necessary. However, a response regarding the waiver was not received from you and therefore the 6:00 p.m. closing time on Thursdays remained in effect. Further, in your Report, you granted a waiver to Oxford Probate Court which is open four hours per week after 5:00 p.m. and to Pomfret Probate Court which is open two hours per week after 5:00 p.m.

Section 10 of P.A. 07-184, effective July 1, 2007, requires your office to notify the judge and town(s) of any non-compliance by October 1, 2007. In your letter to Thompson First Selectman dated September 14, 2007 (enclosed), you wrote that "The facilities of the Thompson Court do not meet the statutory requirements in one or more of the following respects:

There are not separate offices for the judge and staff, and/or

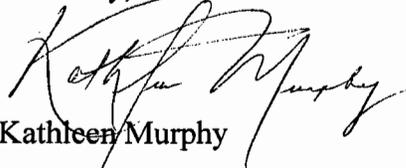
The judge's office is not suitable for the conduct of judicial business in private."

In accordance with the provisions of Public Act 07-184, the Town of Thompson filed with your office, prior to January 1, 2008, a plan and time frame for meeting the statutory requirements (enclosed). There was no notification by your office prior to October 1, 2007 about non-compliance with respect to Court hours. There was no notification by your office prior to October 1, 2007 about non-compliance with respect to Court hours, I believe, because Thompson Probate Court met the twenty hours per week statutory requirement on October 1, 2007, and continues to meet the twenty hours per week statutory requirement. If Thompson Probate Court was out of compliance with Court hours on October 1, 2007, Thompson Probate Court and the Thompson First Selectman had a right to notification of such non-compliance and to provide a plan and time frame for meeting the statutory requirements. Thompson Probate Court and the town of Thompson were denied such notification and right to address this issue until the present time.

In your report, you indicate that the Thompson Probate Court Clerk works ten hours per month. There is no statutory requirement for the amount of time a Clerk must work at a Probate Court per week. It is unclear how Thompson Probate Court is noncompliant with the hours a Clerk must work given that there is no statutory requirement about the number of hours a clerk must work each week.

The Probate Court Compliance Report to the Judiciary Committee regarding Thompson Probate Court's compliance is inaccurate and misleading. I am asking for an amended report to include accurate information regarding Thompson Probate Court's compliance with the twenty hours per week time requirement and a waiver for the 6:00 p.m. closing time on Thursdays, and distribution of the amended Report to the Judiciary Committee.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Murphy

Cc: First Selectman Lawrence Groh Jr  
Rep. Shawn Johnston  
Sen. Don Williams  
Hon. Fred Anthony  
Sen. McDonald  
Rep. Lawlor  
Sen. Handley  
Rep. Fox  
Sen. Kissel  
Rep. O'Neill