



State of Connecticut
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Testimony of the Division of Criminal Justice
Joint Committee on Appropriations – March 27, 2009

- **H.B. No. 6363 An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government, Conservation, Development, Regulation, Protection, Judicial and Corrections**

The Division of Criminal Justice would respectfully offer for the Committee's consideration the following observations on H.B. No. 6363, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government, Conservation, Development, Regulation, Protection, Judicial and Corrections:

A very significant and apparent typographical error occurs in Line 636, which as now written would remove the City of New Haven from the Judicial District of New Haven. This is clearly a typographical error, yet one which must be corrected.

The Division of Criminal Justice must express serious concerns about the revisions to the composition of Judicial Districts as proposed in Section 16 of the bill. Specifically, the Division would question the ability of all agencies involved to implement the realignment that would result from the proposed closing of the Superior Court in Meriden.

Under the plan envisioned in H.B. No. 6363, criminal cases now heard at the Geographical Area No. 7 court in Meriden would be shifted to other courts. Criminal and motor vehicle matters originating in the City of Meriden and towns of Wallingford and Madison would be shifted to the Judicial District of Middlesex (Geographical Area No. 9, Middletown). Criminal and motor vehicle cases originating in the Town of Cheshire would be shifted to the Judicial District of Waterbury (Geographical Area No. 4, Waterbury). Criminal and motor vehicle cases originating in the Towns of Hamden and North Haven would remain in the Judicial District of New Haven, but would move from the Geographical Area No. 7 court in Meriden to Geographical Area No. 23 in New Haven.

The impact of the proposed realignment would be felt most severely at the G.A. No. 23 court in New Haven. Approximately 7,800 criminal and motor vehicle matters are generated each year in the Towns of Hamden and North Haven. Under H.B. No. 6363 these matters would be moved to what is already one of the three busiest Geographical Area courts in the state. The Division of Criminal Justice would obviously require additional prosecutors and support staff at G.A. No. 23 to handle such an influx of additional cases, yet there would be no place to put these personnel. Although we would not even attempt to speak for the Judicial Branch, the Division of Public Defender Services or other agencies that operate within the court system, we cannot imagine that they would not have the same problem. The addition of so many more cases to an already crowded and aging facility would undoubtedly add to the length of the daily dockets creating more inconvenience to the public and others who use the court. There is simply no way to accommodate thousands of additional cases at G.A. No. 23.

Although the impact at G.A. No. 23 would obviously be the greatest, the potential problems resulting from the adoption of the realignment envisioned in H.B. No. 636e would not be limited to New Haven. The proposed closing of G.A. No. 7 in Meriden would also have substantial impact on the Judicial District of Middlesex and G.A. No. 9 in Middletown. Staff would have to be relocated to facilities that are already operating at capacity. Similar concerns also would arise with the proposed closing of the Geographical Area No. 17 court in Bristol and the transfer of the cases now heard there to Geographical Area No. 15 in New Britain, although that component of the realignment plan would not change the composition of the Judicial District of New Britain. Again, the inconvenience to the public and other court users would be increased.

In conclusion, the Division of Criminal Justice would respectfully request the Committee's close consideration of any proposal to realign Judicial Districts and the resulting impact on existing court facilities, the public and those who work in and at the courts. The Division thanks the Committee for this opportunity to provide input on this matter. We would be happy to provide any additional information the Committee might require or to answer any questions that you might have.