



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

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**Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 26, 2009**

House Bill 6703, An Act Concerning Victim Compensation

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, on behalf of the Judicial Branch, in support of House Bill 6703, *An Act Concerning Victim Compensation*. This bill, which is part of the Judicial Branch's legislative package, would allow compensation to be awarded, in certain instances, to state residents for crimes committed abroad and would provide that money in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF) may be expended without an appropriation from the legislature.

In regards to Section 1, when travelling outside of the United States, only Connecticut residents who suffer bodily injury or death as a result of international terrorism may apply to our Office of Victim Services (OVS) for compensation. This proposal would add that a state resident who suffers bodily injury or death as a result of **any** crime committed outside the United States may apply for compensation if the crime takes place in a country that does not have a victim compensation program for which the victim is eligible. This measure - which has been endorsed by the United States Department of Justice - would assist state residents who would otherwise have no other avenue for victim compensation.

Section 2 of the bill would greatly minimize a long-standing problem for OVS, namely, the ability to compensate crime victims in a timely fashion for their injuries. As members of the Committee may know, the CICF compensates crime victims who have suffered a personal injury. While the Fund currently contains more than \$6 million, OVS is limited in each fiscal year to spending the amount that has been allocated by the

legislature. Currently, \$2.65 million is allocated; unfortunately, this is not nearly enough money to compensate victims of crime. In fact, OVS has already expended or obligated its entire allocation for the current fiscal year, forcing other deserving claimants to wait until the next fiscal year commences.

The key impediment to timely compensation of victims is the statutory provision which limits OVS to spending the amount appropriated by the state budget. Millions of dollars generated principally by fees and fines – intended for victim compensation – are out of reach. Efforts to raise the amount of money appropriated have failed largely due to the fact that the CICF is part of the spending cap calculation. Passage of this bill would eliminate the nearly annual quest to raise the amount appropriated and ensure more timely disposition of just claims.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.