

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Judiciary  
February 26, 2010**

Good morning, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, Senator Kissel, Representative O'Neill and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Jonathan C. Stock, formerly Supervising Law Librarian for the Connecticut Judicial Law Libraries at Stamford and Danbury—until my retirement effective June 1, 2009. It has been a singular honor to have served our Connecticut Court Law Library System for 33 years; and now, speaking as representative for the Southern New England Law Librarians' Association, I wish to testify in strong support of House Bill 5148: *An Act Concerning Funding for the Judicial Branch*.

- Passage would safeguard—both in the short and long term—a right historically enjoyed by Connecticut citizens and now threatened: the right to freely research the laws whereby they are governed in public access law libraries.
- It would do so in the short term by restoring OE funds lost last year: funds whose absence presently requires that irreplaceable courthouse libraries in Bridgeport, Milford, Norwich, Litchfield, and Hartford must close before April 1 or July 1 of this year. Therefore, time is of the essence.
- It would do so in the long term by insuring that, as a separate co-equal Branch of Government, Judicial will transmit its annual budget request—unmodified by OPM--directly to the Connecticut General Assembly.
- Hence, future budget reductions could be made only with Legislative concurrence. This change would greatly enhance the ability of our Judicial Branch to honor its statutory mandate for maintaining a system of public access law libraries--distributed on a geographically equitable basis—throughout Connecticut.
- Judge Quinn must be greatly commended for her statement, made at the February 9 Appropriations Committee Meeting, that “law libraries cannot function without updated research materials.” She highlights with exceptional clarity a vital truth: namely, that case law evolves continuously: on a daily basis. Hence, the currency of legal research materials—both print and electronic—is essential.
- My present intent is simply to add several observations—drawn from one court law librarian’s 33 year experience—that underscore her wisdom and offer additional reasons why House Bill 5148 should pass.
- While Judge Quinn’s emphasis upon currency in law collections is vital, I might add that the Judicial Law Libraries—as they now stand—are an integral system. Hence, a carefully designed strategy for “resource sharing” allows each individual library to keep

some titles current while allowing others to lapse—always with the assurance that gaps can be filled by a sister library. What matters most importantly is not that every library have every title current at all times, but that all five libraries presently threatened with closure remain open so they can maintain their unique contribution to this integral “resource sharing” system.

- Court cases do not move forward in virtual reality. They move forward in physical reality—in a real place: the local courthouse where matters are tried.
- The Law Library supporting these local matters must, therefore, be correspondingly local. Geographic proximity and immediate access are all. It is not acceptable for parties to traverse long and/or highly trafficked corridors to a remote law library, perform research, and spin around rushing back to distant courtrooms.
- Print materials, still an indispensable component in legal research, demand such local access.
- Nothing in the Computer Age, contrary to some popular “wisdom,” changes the local access need by an inch or an ounce.
- Public law libraries, with their collective purchasing power, provide invaluable electronic databases—databases whose cost extends beyond the means of most private citizens.
- These databases, however, are attached to strict site licenses: site licenses that do not permit remote access from office or home computers.
- Patrons are faced, therefore, with the same two alternatives they always had: visit the library personally or contact the library—enabling its skilled professionals to resolve reference questions, transmitting needful materials to the interrogator.
- Both alternatives demand that the law library—as always—be locally available and locally staffed.
- The General Statutes of Connecticut, Sec. 11-19a authorizes “a system of law libraries within the state.” It is a system built around the guiding concept of local courthouse access: a system that has long served Connecticut citizens well.
- House Bill 5148 enables the Chief Court Administrator to strengthen this wisely built system with a more secure funding base.
- House Bill 5148 is, therefore, respectfully recommended for legislative enactment.