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The Litchfield Superior Court Library Petition

Connecticut's Executive Branch has cut \$12.9 million in the budget for the Judicial Branch, forcing the proposed closure of six law libraries across the state including the Litchfield Superior Court Library.

These courthouse libraries serve to meet a diverse range of legal research needs from the judiciary, corporate and government attorneys, solo practitioners, average citizens and the indigent. The physical collections and online services available through these libraries, as well as the professional knowledge and expertise of law librarians, contribute to making Connecticut's court law libraries essential partners in the delivery of justice.

Connecticut's fifteen Judicial libraries annually receive an average of 480,000 web site visits, 250,000 walk-in visits, and staff answer approximately 42,000 reference questions. These statistics demonstrate that our court law libraries are unique and essential.

The proposed closure of the Litchfield Superior Court Library is especially alarming because Litchfield will be the only county in the state that does not have access to a public law library. Library users depend upon Litchfield's current and historic legal materials in all formats, and they value the court librarian for her unique knowledge and expertise.

Closure of this library will have a serious negative impact on pro se litigants who rely on the law library to gain access to legal materials they need to defend themselves in court. These already disenfranchised individuals often lack transportation options to travel to a distant law library. While we understand the dire budgetary circumstances that the state currently faces, it is essential that the Litchfield Superior Court Library remain open. It is indispensable to the county's residents.

"The Litchfield County Bar Association is alarmed by the announcement that the Judicial Department intends to close the Litchfield Law Library. The loss of the sole county law library will create a severe hardship for all of the citizens of Litchfield County and those outside the county who have legal matters pending in the Litchfield Superior Court. Removing the limited library we have will impose an enormous hardship upon the lawyers, their clients, the self-represented litigants and upon the judges that hear their cases. We need continued access to a local law library." -- M. Katherine Webster-O'Keefe, President of the Litchfield County Bar Association

The American Association of Law Libraries and the Southern New England Law Librarians Association urge residents of Connecticut to join our efforts to save the Litchfield Superior Court Library, slated for closure by July 1, 2010. Time is of the essence and we ask that you please add your name to the petition today.

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, join together in urging members of the Connecticut legislature to provide the Judicial Branch with adequate funding to keep the Litchfield Superior Court Library open, and we urge the Chief Court Administrator to reconsider her decision to close this library. It is crucial that the public value of the Litchfield Superior Court Library is recognized and preserved to ensure equitable access to the law for all.

Thank you.

Litchfield Superior Court Library

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