



INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA-UAW

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To: Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and Members of the Appropriations Committee
From: Robert Madore, Director
Beverley Brakeman, CAP Representative
RE: Judicial Branch Budget

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Beverley Brakeman and I am here on behalf of our Director Bob Madore in support of our members in UAW Local 2320 the National Organization of Legal Service workers and their clients.

I was in the bank on New Year's Eve day getting money. Behind me was a woman I will call Susan. Susan is a triple amputee due to being hit by a train years ago. She was trying to get a check from her brother cashed. Unable to contain my frustration with the bank teller's inability to help Susan and her insensitivity I asked Susan if I could see the check. It was for \$50 and was from the U.S. Naval Academy credit union. Unfortunately, Susan doesn't have a bank account anywhere so cashing the check was next to impossible.

In speaking with her I learned that in fact Susan has a voluntary conservator who pays her monthly bills and gives her a living allowance out of Susan's SSI and SSDI monies. Susan explained to me that this check from her brother was important because she didn't have any money to eat - McDonalds filet o' fish. The reason for this according to Susan was that her conservator was not giving her enough living allowance. Me not being a lawyer couldn't answer her questions about how to change this situation gave her \$10 to get some food, helped her get on to the bus home and made a phone call. You may think I'm naïve but I am no stranger to people in need or crisis, and Susan wasn't making up stories.

So who did I call? I called our UAW members at CT Legal Services and within a day I had a legal service attorney on the phone with Susan giving her important legal advice. Advice that helped Susan realize changing her conservatorship was probably not a good idea at this time.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the end of the story as I'm sure every legal service attorney in this room knows - I also learned in the course of my conversations with Susan that she had been seriously injured in a bus accident less than a year ago when the bus stopped short and she was thrown out of her wheelchair. She was told she could file a personal injury claim against the bus company but needed help to do so. So, once again I called my friends at CT Legal Services but this time they couldn't help because their resources are dwindling and this is not an area of law they practice - so for 3 weeks now I have been trying to track down help for Susan to very little avail.

So I'm here today to urge you to find a way to fund the Judicial Branch sufficiently to pay the money allocated by the legislature for legal aid. This legislature has always made these clients and their attorneys a priority – I sincerely hope you will do so again. These top notch attorneys are going to lose their jobs and their clients will fall further into the cracks of poverty and neglect. You have an opportunity and a responsibility to stop this from happening.

We can no longer afford to keep cutting services to balance our state budget. I urge you to step up to the challenge again of finding new and more progressive ways to raise revenue to meet our state's residents growing needs.

Thank you.

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