

JUSTICE FOR JOE

To: The Appropriations Committee of the General Assembly
The Honorable Senator Toni Harp and Representative Tony Walker, Co-Chairs
March 19th, 2012

My name is Tom Connolly and I am Joe Connolly's older brother. I ask for your support for raised bill number H.B. 5443, An Act concerning Benefits for Surviving Spouses Under the Teachers' Retirement System.

Joe was only 55 years old when he suddenly died on Nov. 12, 2011. I got a call from Joe's wife, Leanne. She said, "You better get over here right away." I refused to think the worst. No one expected Joe to die. I was in the room when the last attempts were made to save Joe. The pain of losing my brother is not describable. If you ever lost anyone that you loved you have felt that pain.

When Leanne was told she had to go to the State Legislature to change a law to get Joe's full pension it was shocking. First the death of her husband, my brother Joe; then being told that she has to go and have a bill passed to get the full pension that my brother paid into for 22 years.

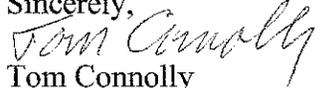
Joe's "crime" was an honest oversight of not changing the beneficiary from my father, who died six years ago to his wife, Leanne. The punishment for Joe's "crime" is for his family to lose more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of Joe's pension that he earned while teaching in middle school for 22 years. His family will lose their home and Joe's hopes for the future of his wife and children will be lost. Does that sound remotely fair to anyone? No one I have spoken to thinks so.

I know there are a lot of injustices in Connecticut. And there are many of which neither you nor I can do anything about. But this is one injustice that is correctable. While I and others appreciate the sympathy that many legislators have expressed we also need your empathy. Put yourself in Leanne's place. This could have been you sister-in-law, your spouse, your daughter or other loved one.

Please find it in your heart to expedite H.B. 5443 and get it to the Governors office as quickly as possible so my sister-in-law and her two children can move on with their lives. This is what you would want for anyone that you loved. Every time we have to do something to try to get this law changed we relive Joe's death.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. If you have any questions please contact me.

Sincerely,



Tom Connolly

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