

**Testimony of  
Scot X Esdaile, President  
Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches**

**Judiciary Committee Public Hearing  
March 9, 2012**

**Senate Bill 31, *An Act Establishing a Commission on Judicial  
Compensation***

Good afternoon, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Senator Kissel, Representative Hetherington and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Scott Esdaile and I am the President of the Connecticut State Conference of the NAACP Branches. I am here today, in the Spirit of the great Thurgood Marshal, Charles Hamilton Houston, and Judge Constance Baker Motley, and in my capacity as President of the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches, to testify in support of **Senate Bill 31, *An Act Establishing a Commission on Judicial Compensation***.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots based civil rights organization. Formed in 1909 by a multiracial group of progressive thinkers, the NAACP is a nonprofit organization established with the objective of ensuring the political, educational, social, and economic equality of people of color. For over 102 years, the NAACP has challenged this nation to uphold its promise of equal opportunity toward the goal of eliminating racial prejudice and removing all barriers of racial discrimination through democratic processes

**Passage of this bill is the right thing to do**

- This is a good government issue - it is essential for our state that we have a highly qualified and diversified bench with a variety of experiences.

- We need to attract highly qualified lawyers of color to the Bench.
- I am sure you are all very aware that minorities are disproportionately represented in our criminal justice system. With a large percentage of defendants being members of minority groups, it only makes sense that those working in Connecticut's criminal justice system should be as diverse a group as the communities they serve.
- Increasing diversity among everyone who works in the criminal justice system will foster faith in that system.
- Diversity among judges is particularly important because they are so visible. Increasing the number of minority judges will go a long way to instill confidence in the system they preside over.
- While rarely an easy or welcome task, periodic increase of the salaries of public officials is necessary to ensure the effective operation of government.
- No effective system of government can consistently attract and retain qualified public officials with cultural competency if their compensation falls far behind with no reliable method to fairly adjust compensation levels as economic conditions warrant.
- Protecting the compensation of Connecticut's public officials against inflation and other such factors is essential to prevent genuine hardship over time, hardship that increasingly discourages recruitment and retention of talented individuals.
- Unfortunately, we seem to be in a period in which greater public dissatisfaction with state employees and public officials has bred a growing unwillingness to address the salary issue at all.
- During this period, the value of a judges' salary has diminished.

## **It is the Right Time for this bill**

- It is clear that the current system is not working.
- Connecticut's judges are underpaid compared with judges elsewhere and continue to fall behind other states.
- With no consistent mechanism to adjust salaries and little hope that the Legislature will enact pay increases in the future, highly qualified attorneys from our community have not pursued judgeships.
- It is very difficult to recruit highly talented, energetic, community oriented attorneys to this noble public service without competitive pay!.
- The new Commission would be effective July 1, 2012.
- I want to thank the Governor for taking the initiative on this important issue. I know that he shares our commitment to increasing the number of minority judges. This bill will not only increase the prospects of minority attorneys applying to be a judge, but it will also remove the determination of compensation from a political process that has undermined judges' salaries for years.
- We need to act now!!!
- Thank You for your time!!!