

Court of Common Council



CITY OF HARTFORD
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OFFICE OF MINORITY LEADER LARRY DEUTSCH

With regards to H.B. 6581 and S.B. 1062.

Good day, to our representatives of the people and audience,

I am Dr. Larry Deutsch, speaking in several roles: a pediatrician, former high school teacher, former jury member, and now as Minority Leader for the City Council here in Hartford.

In each of these, I've had much contact with youth and seen some of the impacts of our legal system -- which has not always advanced the cause of a Justice on which many of us agree.

It was 14 years ago that I myself sat on a jury. During and since a time like that, one can learn a whole lot. Briefly, and sadly, the experience may show, as said by a famous lawyer just before the Civil War, that we cannot automatically think Law and Justice are the same.

In brief, a young man appeared swept into an action at the age of 15 1/2, apprehended at 16, tried at 17. Some factors with 4 serious charges resulted in a prison sentence of 55 years. In our close-up view:

A. Handguns and societal violence pushed by adults and media then - AND NOW - all around: what can you and we do about this?

B. No legal representation when first arrested and questioned. Police didn't even allow a call to his mother or anyone of Majority, let alone an attorney. What can you and we do about this?

C. He may have had Miranda read and waived in there alone during questioning. Then came a nice long confession which couldn't have been all his. We think force was used. Of course, it wasn't recorded. What can you and we do about this?

D. Of course, the judge admitted the confession paper as evidence, and testimony of two detectives who themselves had gotten in trouble in the Department. What can you and we do about this?

E. Technicalities led to conviction on 3 charges after 4 days deliberation, with jury hung on 4th. Cross-examination of police and others by Public Defender was (in this person's opinion) short -- and (compared with other leading accused men), the sentence very long. What can you and we do about this?

F. There followed appointment of one Public Defender after another. Each time we hoped

justice would be done through good representation, possibly sentence modification. At one time, the still-young man read and learned how to file his own Habeas appeal - which resulted in censure of one appointed lawyer who dropped the case without telling anyone and without replacement for YEARS. What can you and we do about this?

G. Besides asking for and receiving legal books and getting his GED and taking courses and trades, the technicalities seem to remove "good time" consideration. What can you and we do about this?

H. When release finally occurs, what real educational and job opportunities will there be? Will boxes and prejudicial obstacles continue? What can you and we do about this?

I. During this period, understanding and concepts of thinking and actions of young people - and even old - has changed markedly - learning about factors of environment, brain and behavior development, violence, jobs, economy, schooling, and so much more. It involves budget as well as law. What can you and we do about this?

Finally: During this period, you, and I, find ourselves as Elected Officials. He is a now a Constituent as well as fellow citizen and member of society, now with more skills and wisdom but less time ahead to use them. What can you and we do about this?

Let's all support several of the bills and proposals to bring the budget and the Law closer to our belief in Justice.