

Kess, Quinn

From: pbaldini@juno.com
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 4:39 PM
To: LABTestimony
Cc: Rep. OBrien, Elaine
Subject: Written testimony HB5066

Re: HB5066

To the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Pamela Baldini. For the last six years and seven months I have been an Assistant Clerk of the Connecticut Probate system working initially at Avon Probate Court for the Honorable Cynthia C. Becker and Simsbury Probate Court for the Honorable Paul Knierim. With the consolidation I am employed by the Simsbury Regional Probate Court.

To be honest, I don't understand the purpose of HB5066. Is it to make us union covered employees? If the bill passes and is signed, we will have to join a union, even if we are not state employees? That does not even begin to address the problems the employees have with probate court employment.

- (1) Probate Court Administration (PCA), an agency of the State of Connecticut, determines our work hours, our pay, and our status as employees. Yet we are not Connecticut State employees. In my court when the courts merged in 2011 there was one Chief Clerk position and three Clerk positions based on prior job title. The remainder retained their Assistant Clerks status. Since then two Clerks have left, yet no Assistant Clerk has been promoted because of PCA directives. That is important because I am 31 cents away from my maximum pay. According to C.G.S. Section 45a-21 ... and shall serve at the pleasure of the judge of the court of probate in which they are employed. PCA is determining open positions.
- (2) I was hired by Judge Knierim in 2007 at \$20.00 per hour. Fast forward to 2014 and I now make \$21.69 per hour. \$1.69 more in six plus years. After tax deductions, my hourly pay is about \$15.00 per hour. This is pitiful. The probate court does not subsidize my insurance as it is through my spouse. There are no hidden benefits being paid to or for me other than Social Security. My 2013 review gave me a 4.5 out of 5 rating. PCA would not accept any ratings of 5.
- (3) If my judge is not re-elected, my position could be eliminated to make room for employees of the incoming judge. I cannot transfer to another agency because we are not considered state employees. I took the paralegal I exam, about 10 years ago, and was placed within the top 10 positions at the time, but no longer am on the list.
- (4) PCA determines if we can leave early because of a snowstorm or the day before a holiday, not the judge.

Probate court employees are responsible for front line contact with the residents of Connecticut and members of the legal profession. As a statutory court we take our responsibilities very seriously, keeping up to date on state statutes to make sure correct papers are filed and attending seminars. We go so far as to work on a day off so co-workers could attend seminars. The Annual Clerks meeting cannot be attended by all clerks as it would mean courts had to close.

My attempts to find what my retirement plan would pay after ten years of service have been stonewalled by another Connecticut state agency because there is no consequences. We are not a real agency/department. I am not given the courtesy of a return call, after months of trying. We are not important except to the General Fund.

If the bill passes and is signed, I must join a union and pay dues, when I won't know if I have a job until after my judge wins this election or a new judge makes me an offer? That offer is only good to the next election. Where does one find a job and be eligible for a pension at 65 years old? How can a union guarantee a living wage and my position when the statute says otherwise?

According to the clerks association, we are suppose to be very excited that after 10 years we can leave and take fully paid health insurance with us. As a taxpayer, I take exception that a 30 year old could walk away with fully paid insurance for life. State employees only have to work for five years to be vested in their pension, which includes every employee at Probate Court Administration, and our judges.

HB5066 should be a bill to make us Connecticut State Employees, not union.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and your consideration.

Sincerely,
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Cc: Elaine.Obrien@cga.ct.gov
John Kissel