

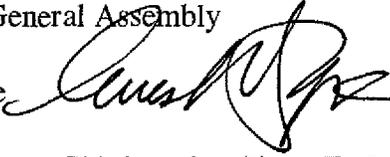
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April 8, 2015

TO: Members of the Judiciary Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

FROM: Louis R. Pepe 

RE: Reappointment of Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers

I write on behalf of the Honorable Chase T. Rogers, whose reappointment to the position of Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court will come before you Friday, April 10.

I have had the pleasure and honor of knowing and working with Chief Justice Rogers from the time she was in private practice, through her years on the Superior Court bench, the Appellate Court and as Chief Justice for the past eight years. During all that time, I have known her to display the highest possible character, integrity, judicial temperament, sense of fairness and commitment to justice. During her eight years as Chief Justice, she has worked tirelessly to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our court system, to the great benefit of all litigants.

Shortly after her appointment as Chief Justice, she appointed a Public Service and Trust Commission and charged it with undertaking a comprehensive overview of the entire Judicial Branch to determine its strengths and weaknesses and take any necessary corrective action. The investigation could not have been more inclusive; it solicited comments and input from lawyers, judges, bar associations, civic groups and other users of the Judicial System. The end product was a Strategic Plan for the Judicial System that proposed improvements to virtually all aspects of the system, including enhanced equal access, diversity, consistency and fairness. Chief Justice Rogers then took all necessary steps to ensure that plan was implemented.

But that significant endeavor has hardly been her only accomplishment. Under the leadership of Chief Justice Rogers, the Judicial Branch:

- Established Volunteer Attorney Day programs in several court locations, whereby attorneys donate their time to assist members of the public in the areas of foreclosure and family cases.

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- Developed the concept for the LawyerCorp CT program, which is modeled after *Teach Across America*, and will provide legal assistance to individuals who cannot afford an attorney.
- Established a permanent Access to Justice Commission so that the Judicial Branch remains committed to developing new ways to ensure access to justice.
- Organized two Pro Bono Summits for attorneys, one in 2011 and another in 2014.
- Trained Branch staff to serve as local contacts for people with disabilities who need an accommodation under the ADA.
- Conducted limited English proficiency training for more than 100 of the Judicial Branch outside vendors, a practice that is unique to state judicial systems. Trained more than 1,500 Branch staff on working with and responding to the needs of persons with limited English proficiency.
- Established the Courthouse Observation Team, the first in the nation, to help ensure uniform and quality service, where staff anonymously evaluate the level of service provided.
- Established a procedure for jurors to answer their summons online to confirm or reschedule their jury service.
- Established the practice, beginning with the September 2009 term, of having the Supreme Court hear cases en banc -- in panels of seven -- in all cases in which there are no disqualifications. The new policy recognizes that the public has an interest in having every justice hear and decide every case, whenever possible.

The Chief Justice has also been quite sensitive to the prodigious increase in self-represented parties in our Judicial System -- particularly in family court -- and to the problems they encounter when they enter such a foreign environment. Working with the bar and the trial judges, she has worked diligently to minimize the obstacles the self-represented parties face while still ensuring that represented parties are not disadvantaged and judicial resources are not overwhelmed. Given her efforts in this regard, I am particularly bewildered by newspaper accounts of the dissatisfaction expressed by some pro se litigant groups. From what I have observed, there can be no justified basis whatsoever for that criticism.

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Similarly, the Chief Justice has demonstrated an acute awareness of the difficulties litigants encounter in family court. Surely we can appreciate that dissatisfaction with the adjudicatory process will always run highest among parties in marital disputes, for what should be obvious reasons. But here again, the Chief Justice has been responsive to complaints made about the process -- including the highly publicized issues regarding the appointment of guardians ad litem -- and she again has taken steps to address any legitimate issues regarding fairness, cost and efficiency.

Most recently, Chief Justice Rogers has initiated a pilot program, which, if successful, will indisputably constitute the most momentous change in case management in the recent history of the Connecticut court system. Instead of a case file having all the pretrial motions and proceedings addressed by whichever judge is hearing motions or conducting settlement conferences on a particular day during the several years preceding trial, Chief Justice Rogers is testing the "one case/one judge" system. Under this approach, "judicial ownership" of a case is established from the first day it is filed through and including its trial or other disposition. This case management approach has been used in the federal court system for many years, and its effectiveness is well known. A judge becomes familiar with the cases assigned to her, their complexities and issues, and the counsel representing the parties. The judge can then establish a scheduling order in each case early on and ensure the efficient and speedy process to trial. The "one case/one judge" process has been used in our own state court system on the Complex Litigation Docket for many years, and it has produced outstanding results in terms of speedy and efficient pretrial proceedings and effective use of judicial resources. Chief Justice Rogers' efforts to expand this system to all cases on all dockets is to be applauded.

The bench, the bar and the citizens of Connecticut have been very fortunate to have the Honorable Chase T. Rogers in the position of Chief Justice for these past eight years. Her reappointment to that position can only serve to enhance the fairness and efficacy of our judicial system, and, therefore, I urge you to act favorably on her renomination.

Thank you very much for your consideration.