

## Carroll, Rhonda

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**From:** Thomas Cummins <thomascummins@prodigy.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 29, 2016 3:28 PM  
**To:** JudTestimony  
**Cc:** Daniel Gaita; Sen. McLachlan, Michael  
**Subject:** SB214 Testimony

Dear Judiciary Committee,

I am a member of the Louis Russo Project; a group of Veterans and citizens concerned about the mistreatment of Mr. Louis Russo under the CT Probate system. We were organized under the leadership of Dan Gaita and his Veteran's organization "Operation Vet-Fit" based in Bethel, CT. I have read Mr. Gaita's statement to the committee online and want to add a few words to what I have seen while a member of this group and how it has impacted the life of Mr. Louis Russo while under the rule of the Probate court.

The details of how Lou Russo was abused by a Conservator, Mr. Mark Broadmeyer, should be well known by most of you. If not, I would suggest that those concerned take the time to contact Dan Gaita for copies of his communications with all the various State agencies, Veterans organizations, and the Probate courts themselves to see how they refused to assist this 97 year old World War II Veteran. The Louis Russo project was initiated to create a force of goodwill to counteract the lack of concern and action by all the agencies contacted to assist Louis Russo. Many agencies did seem to want to assist when contacted, but felt that their hands were tied, so to speak, because Mr. Russo was under the complete control of the Probate Court. Many of these agencies accept tax dollars for their purpose or are a part of the government system, and I was especially disgusted, as a taxpayer, to see how ineffectual the agencies were when confronted by the overwhelming power of the Probate system.

I attended many of the Probate Court hearings for Mr. Russo as an advocate (I am a member of the American Legion, Post 100, Bethel CT) and this was also extremely disheartening. The attorneys were not co-operative with the advocates, especially Dan Gaita. Although Mr. Gaita was instrumental in getting Lou Russo back into his newly remodeled home with the assistance of many volunteers (after hearing of Lou Russo's being robbed by his conservator and not having access to his home), the attorneys dismissed and stonewalled all efforts made on Lou Russo's behalf. I witnessed the unnecessary and repeated vilification by those attorneys of Dan Gaita, a man that Lou Russo called "his guardian angel" in a Danbury News Times article about his abuse and subsequent restoration, which after two years is still not complete. It was disturbing to know that those who were tasked with aiding and assisting Mr. Russo by the state were actually a part of the process of abuse. We were there as an organization to assist Mr. Russo, and any actions by Operation Vet-fit and Dan Gaita were vocally and viciously criticized by the attorneys, to the detriment of Mr. Russo's estate. Yet, Dan Gaita continued unwaveringly to assist Lou Russo, and get the job done, without much, if any, assistance from the agencies tasked to do so. State Senator Michael McLachlan must be thanked for his concern during this ordeal, which stood out amongst all the others who passed the buck.

The Probate court needs much more supervision and control than is in SB214. The Probate court does not seem accountable to any other agency or branch of government, and complaints of abuse fall on deaf ears. Please amend the bill, or create a new one, so that it includes this accountability, and removes the loopholes that Dan Gaita describes in his written testimony. The well-being of some of our most vulnerable citizens are at stake here in Connecticut, and it would be another crime to waste the opportunity to correct the inadequacies discovered in the Louis Russo case.

Sincerely,  
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