

# Connecticut General Assembly

## Habeas Corpus Matters Task Force

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Co-chairpersons



c/o Judiciary Committee, Room 2500  
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To: Senator Gary Winfield, Chairman  
Representative Steve Stafstrom, Chairman  
Judiciary Committee Members

From: Ken Rosenthal, Esq., Co-Chair, Habeas Task Force  
Merit Lajoie, Co-Chair, Habeas Task Force

Special Act No. 18-18 established a task force to study the filing of habeas corpus matters in the state. The task force was required to submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the judiciary not later than January 1, 2019.

Membership appointments to the task force were not completed until May of 2019, five months after the report would have been due. Nevertheless, the task force organized and met continuously through March of 2020. On March 20, 2020, Governor Lamont issued Executive Order No. 7H (Stay home, stay safe) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The task force was therefore suspended and not able to complete its work.

Undoubtedly, the task force had not anticipated that the state would remain in such uncertainty for this long. Attached you will find a report of the task force and its work through March of 2020.

Habeas corpus petitions that challenge the underlying criminal conviction impact those convicted and sentenced as well as the victim(s) or surviving family members of victims. Habeas corpus petitions that challenge an inmate's conditions of confinement impact the inmate's health and/or safety. Currently, petitions that are filed frivolously and successively impact the petitions with merit from being heard in a timely manner. The habeas corpus process deserves examination and improvement to ensure justice for all involved in the criminal justice process.

While there was no consensus reached on specific reforms in the filing of Habeas Corpus petitions, there was general consensus among members of the task force that reforms would improve the current process. At this time, however, given the foregoing circumstances and the associated lengthy interruption of proceedings, the task force feels compelled to request that the legislature determine whether to re-authorize and approve continuation of the task force under whatever new reporting deadline is deemed appropriate. We look forward to the legislature's decision