



STATE REPRESENTATIVE BOB GODFREY

PROBATE COURT REFORM

MAKING GOVERNMENT SMALLER WITHOUT HURTING PEOPLE



Bob explaining the probate court reform legislation in the House Chamber.

The idea was to develop a plan that will considerably save money both in the short and long term while also ensuring that the probate court remains the most user-friendly court and is accessible to those who need it and whose lives it impacts.

The change reduced the number of courts by more than half. It also increased the use of technology, centralized accounting and budgeting, and enhanced professionalism. It shows that making government effective and efficient is not a meaningless cliché, but a reality.

A SPIRIT OF BIPARTISANSHIP

The passage of Public Act 09-114 is a great victory and represents an impressive example of all three branches of government working together. The legislation passed both chambers with enormous bipartisan support and was signed into law by the Governor shortly after.

The probate courts, some of which date back to the Colonial era, will now move forward toward much needed modernization. This consolidation will allow the probate courts to be more efficient, accessible, and help it stay financially afloat.



Bob and Danbury Probate Judge Dianne Yamin.

Legislative attention focused on cost cutting while maintaining quality services. Foremost was consolidating administration and technology-based efficiencies, which will result in better productivity. The state-wide (but not district specific) increases in caseload demanded that courts be opened to the public 40 hours a week. The increase in the legal complexity of cases prompted the Governor to insist rightfully that, like superior court judges, future probate court judges be attorneys.

SAVING YOUR TAX DOLLARS

The best aspect of reform is the amount of taxpayer money (your money) that will be saved. The legislative non-partisan Office of Fiscal Analysis reported direct savings of \$4 million in 2011 and \$7 million every year after.

The bill reduces the current 117 probate courts down to 54. There will also be savings from closing 60-plus courthouses.

The reform encourages the practice of regionalism and cooperation among multiple towns with similar characteristics to share resources.



Rep. Arthur O'Neill, Bob, Governor Rell and Judge Fred Anthony at the Probate Court bill signing ceremony.

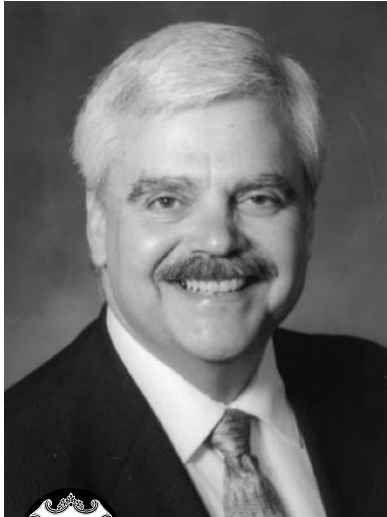


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Dear Neighbor,

I wanted to share with you an important change to state government I crafted which will save you money - probate court reform.

The recession has impacted all residents and it is my job to protect you and your families during these troubling times. While I am optimistic the economy will rebound and jobs will be created, I understand the need to produce a fair and responsible state budget now.

Balancing a budget should not require slashing essential services - it does require maximizing resources, promoting regional cooperation,

and listening to people like you. A major change to the probate court system encompasses those ideas and puts them into action. I am proud of the tremendous work and cooperation from both sides of the aisle and in all three branches of government to see this bill become law.

I hope you find the information in this newsletter informative and understand that change is happening in our state. Thank you for the privilege of serving you in the House of Representatives.

- Bob

Making Government More Efficient

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