

The Connecticut General Assembly

Task Force to Improve Access to Legal Counsel in Civil Matters

Co-Chairs:

William H. Clendenen, Jr. / Timothy Fisher



c/o Judiciary Committee, Room 2500
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MINUTES

Friday, September 30, 2016

8:00 a.m., MNH Building, Room 105 Quinnipiac School of Medicine

The meeting was called to order at 8:15 AM.

The following committee members were present:

Chair William H. Clendenen, Chair Timothy Fisher, Judge Michael Albis, Brian Austin, Jamey Bell, Working Chair Dean Jennifer Brown, Dan Cargill, Jason Fragoso, Kathy Flaherty, Monte Frank, Working Chair Judge Gerald Fox, III, Susan Garcia Nofi, Robert C. Hinton, Daniel S. Jo, Walter A. Menjivar, Representative Rosa Rebimbas, Anthony Shannon, Working Chair Tim Shearin, Judge Elliot N. Solomon, Cecil Thomas, Alvin Wilson, Working Chair Michael Wishnie, Judge Glenn A. Woods, Perry Zinn Rowthorn

The following committee members were absent:

Catherine Bailey, Senator Eric Coleman, Mayor Dan Drew, Senator John Kissel, Judge Ingrid Moll, Edward O'Hanlan, Susan O'Stoey, Deborah Witkin

Members reintroduced themselves and Chairs remarked on the *Justice Innovation in Times of Change Summit* that was being held concurrently at Quinnipiac School of Law. The initiatives to be discussed at the summit were similar in nature to the goals of the task force. There are many opportunities in the civil/criminal practice of law for common ground and crafting practical solutions.

Minutes were approved and seconded with a minor correction to Kathy Flaherty's name.

Chairs reviewed the priorities of the task force and focused on the charge to examine the impact that the lack of access to counsel has on the ability to secure "essential human needs" and in essence on each individual's quality of life.

Discussion included:

- Fiscal considerations to implementing the initiatives
- Burden on courts and on entire judicial system of pro se litigants
- Burden on opposing counsel in pro se cases
- What are the harms suffered because of the cost of injustice?
- What and where are our priorities for implementation and how do we measure success? Financial or other means?

In deference to the task force deadlines, members will utilize the available empirical data and create a hierarchical list of the priorities of society i.e. housing, family, personal safety. Members discussed their personal observation of “essential needs” based on antidotal experiences in the courts and law.

- Dean Jennifer Brown discussed the work of the “Goals & Principles” Work Group. Their group will assist in direction for the other groups
- Michael Wishnie explained the work of the “Dismantling Barriers” Work Group
- Judge Gerry Fox discussed the work and daunting scope of the “Demand” Work Group
- Tim Shearin reviewed the efforts of the “System Alignment & Modification” Work Group. Legal Intern Pauleen Consebido drafted a memo listing organizations providing legal services to the poor in CT and their funding.

Discussion included:

- What current systems can be modified without a huge cost?
- What regulations can be altered with minimal change but maximum results?
- Can we suggest each agency identify efficiencies?
- Are we maximizing federal dollars?
- What programs are/are not working?
- Are we maximizing the resources we currently have

Work group members discussed the daunting objectives and the final approach to the report. Members were encouraged to think of the “big picture”, be creative yet build upon proven successes while being pragmatic in the financial considerations of the final price tag. Discussion included the significance and drafting of successful legislation for a long term vision combined with minimizing potential opposition and the practicality of any short term success of passing and implementing such legislation.

Chairs will circulate a Table of Contents and outline for each work group to use in October to develop material for the task force report. The full task force will meet November 10 to review all material and conclusions. Meeting was adjourned at 9:50 am.