

CCDLA
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Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
RAISED BILL NO. 886
AN ACT CONCERNING THE LOCATION OF JURY SERVICE
April 1, 2011

TESTIMONY OF JON L. SCHOENHORN, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE
CONNECTICUT CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS ASSOCIATION, IN OPPOSITION
TO RAISED BILL NO. 886

Chairman Coleman, Chairman Fox, and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee:

CCDLA strongly opposes Raised Bill No. 886 which limits jury duty to the geographical area where the juror lives. While the idea behind the bill may be grounded in making jury service more convenient for citizens to get to the courthouse, the proposal will have the unfortunate and unconstitutional effect of making juries in both civil and criminal cases less fair, more racially and socio-economically segregated, and not representative of a cross-section of the community.

Not every judicial district has multiple geographical areas, so it will not change jury service in far-flung counties such as Litchfield or Tolland. However, in judicial districts with multiple geographical areas, the jurisdictions are not divided according to any neutral criteria, but strictly by municipal boundary. Consequently more suburban "GA" courthouses in such places as Enfield, Manchester, Milford and Norwalk will have an unfair number of affluent and white citizens making up the entire jury pool, because they will draw only from the towns surrounding them. That will leave the urban "GA" courts with the bulk of the minority and poor jurors because of the overwhelming number of persons of color who coincidentally live in those cities. Also, many of the geographical area courthouses are far from the judicial district courthouses and seldom have a civil court docket, meaning that those citizens will never sit on a civil case.

Therefore CCDLA opposes Raised Bill 886.

Respectfully submitted,
CCDLA

By _____
Jon L. Schoenhorn, Esq.