



Gwinnett County Bar Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 704
Lawrenceville, GA 30046
(678) 215-6355

February 12, 2010

Senator Don Balfour
453 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

RE: State Budget Cuts to the Judicial Branch


Dear Senator Balfour:

I write on behalf of our organization to voice our concern regarding State budget cuts to the judicial branch. In the Gwinnett Judicial Circuit, we have experienced a population explosion over the past few years, and with that comes an increased demand on our Court system. Cuts to our judicial branch are simply unacceptable, as they would seriously impact Gwinnett families, businesses, and the safety of our citizens. Our judges, prosecutors, and public safety personnel are hard pressed to fulfill their constitutional duties in protecting the rights of all Gwinnett citizens, given the County's recent budget woes; our citizens cannot afford to bear further cuts at the State level.

The judicial branch has worked cooperatively with the General Assembly and the Governor to drastically reduce spending in many areas, including funding of senior judges, travel, training, and computer upgrades. The elimination of funding for senior judges alone has had the equivalent effect of eliminating 16 full-time Superior Court judges. As you are well aware, Superior Court handles the most important cases that directly affect our community, and given the increased demand on our Court system, the loss of our senior judges has had a tremendous impact in our Circuit. Because of constitutional speedy trial requirements in criminal cases, domestic cases like divorce, custody, and child support are being postponed, delaying critical decisions affecting the welfare, safety, and security of Gwinnett families and children. Likewise, general business cases like contract disputes, collections and repossessions are also being delayed, affecting the timely resolution of these matters, driving up the cost of doing business and adversely impacting economic development. In these difficult times, our families are struggling to deal with financial woes, and our businesses are working harder than ever to make it. If our Court system lets them down, our community suffers irreparable harm. Further cuts to our judicial branch must be stopped.

These are unprecedented economic times, and we understand and appreciate the extremely difficult decisions you have to make in performing your constitutional duties as members of the General Assembly. Maintaining access to the courts and protecting the constitutional rights of our citizens, however, are fundamental responsibilities of our government. Let us not forget that the judicial branch is the third branch of government, and it must be protected. On behalf of the Gwinnett County Bar Association, I urge you to oppose any additional budget reductions that will undermine the ability of the judicial branch to effectively protect Gwinnett County citizens. We thank you for your service to our community and our State. If there is anything that I can do or that the members of our organization can do, please know that you can call on us. We consider this a matter of utmost importance, and we thank you in advance for your serious consideration of this issue.

Respectful Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela Couch Nguyen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Angela Couch Nguyen, President
Gwinnett County Bar Association

/acn

cc: Gwinnett County Superior Court Bench
All members of the Gwinnett Delegation
All members of the Gwinnett County Bar Association (via email only)
Mr. Bryan Cavan, President, State Bar of Georgia