



The Court of Common Pleas of Bucks County
OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF COURTS
BUCKS COUNTY COURTHOUSE

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Doylestown, Pennsylvania 18901
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Mary K. Smithson
Clerk of Courts

April 29, 2014

The Honorable Stewart Greenleaf

Senate of Pennsylvania

Chairman of Senate Judiciary Committee and Distinguished Members of the Senate Judiciary

Subject: Senate Bill 1215-Opposed

Dear Honorable Senator Greenleaf:

My name is Mary K. Smithson, elected Clerk of Courts of Bucks County since 1996, and would like to state on the record that I am opposed to Senate Bill 1215. I am held accountable daily to the taxpayers to ensure accountability, reliability and trustworthiness to the citizens I represent. Being an elected official is not a burden, as argued by the Administrative Office of the Pa. Courts(A.O.P.C..) but rather honored as my experience in managing criminal cases enables me to ensure the public that their voices are heard.

My offices handles over 11,000 cases a year which includes child welfare, juvenile and criminal, as well as defendant correspondence, State police records request, appeals to Superior and Supreme Court, restitution and bail to name a few of the functions which I manage. Our state wide computer system (CPCMS) is paper driven and the costs continues to grow. The expense of implementation was well over 75 million and the price tag still is growing. in the 2014-2015 budget the state is requesting 58.9 million of which 30.9 million are personnel costs alone and pay raises. E-filing is not affordable to implement throughout the state. Appeals cases must be sent to higher courts and the cost is born on the burden of taxpayers. For example, an Appeal to Supreme Court, five copies of the notes of testimony and all matters related to the case, must be sent to Supreme Court. The cost for paper and postage, staff time is expensive and the taxpayers pay the heavy burden for these costs. Many cases take at least one FULL box of paper. There are NO cost incurred by the defendant. Each County has its own local rules and uniformity is non-existing. Sentencing sheets, case processing, fees are all designed differently which the A.O.P.C. agreed to when establishing a state wide computer system known as Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS). Their comments were always, one size doesn't fit all.

This legislation would create additional fiscal costs to the already burdening budget. The dollar can only stretch so far as the major priorities facing the Commonwealth today are the deficit pension, education, transportation and medical costs. The Tax payers are overwhelmed to say the least.

The ideas of NO new tax dollars are needed for this take-over is simply NOT true. Adding three additional employees to manage a transition is an additional burden to the already strap-funded our pension, and medical cost. It simply makes NO sense. Government should make a wiser business decision.

As all of the members of the Senate prepare to work on the fiscal budget, please keep in mind that additional expenses are all over this proposed Senate Bill. As a fiscal watchdog, I have the independence and accountability which taxpayers deserve. I have streamlined and processed court cost collections while mainting high business standards and processes. Eliminating elected positions will not enhance our unification but will add additional costs to taxpayers and giving one branch of government MORE power.

I Appreciate your consideration in opposing Senate Bill 1215.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary K. Smithson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Mary K. Smithson

Clerk of Courts Bucks County