

CONNECTICUT COALITION FOR ***JUSTICE*** IN EDUCATION FUNDING

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For Immediate Release

EAST HARTFORD MAYOR MELODY CURREY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF CCJEF

Bristol Public Schools Superintendent Philip Streifer chosen as Vice President, New Britain parent Merrill Gay becomes Treasurer, and Bridgeport Community Organizer Marilyn Ondrasik to serve as Secretary of the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding.

East Hartford Mayor Melody Currey was elected by acclamation of CCJEF members attending this year's sixth annual meeting at The Lyceum in Hartford last Friday. Her acceptance remarks praised coalition members for the leadership and commitment they have shown in their efforts to further educational adequacy and equity on behalf of Connecticut schoolchildren, parents, and taxpayers. She also lauded the Yale Law School Education Adequacy Clinic for its outstanding legal representation of the coalition, and congratulated the Clinic and fellow CCJEF members on the recent Connecticut Supreme Court victory in *CCJEF v. Rell*, which found that under the state's constitution, schoolchildren have the right to a quality education.



After undergraduate study at the State University of New York at Cobleskill, Mayor Currey has given most of her adult life to community and public service in East Hartford, serving for 13 years as a State Representative before being elected in 2005 as mayor. Now in her third mayoral term, she serves as

Chair of the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and First Vice President of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), as well as a board member of several other local, regional, and statewide organizations.

CCJEF Executive Director Steve Cassano, formerly mayor of the neighboring Town of Manchester, praised Mayor Currey for her outstanding leadership skills and her courage in taking on the difficult challenges the coalition faces, both on the legal and political fronts, during this period of fiscal crisis. Cassano noted the distinguished records of both Mayor Currey and Superintendent Streifer and their reputations as being highly effective problemsolvers and model public servants — experienced leaders who work congenially and persuasively with municipal, legislative, and education colleagues of all political persuasions.

The Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding is a broad-based coalition of municipalities, local boards of education, statewide education associations, unions, advocacy organizations, parents, and other concerned taxpayers intent upon modernizing the state's fiscal infrastructure to ensure suitable and equal educational opportunity for all Connecticut schoolchildren. Relying less on property taxes for funding the public schools is also integral to the coalition's reform agenda.

Further growing CCJEF membership is part of the Currey-Streifer action plan. Member school communities are home to more than 45 percent of the state's public school children, including some three-fourths of all minority students, those from low-income homes, and students from homes where English is not the primary language. The Yale Law School Education Adequacy Clinic provides pro bono representation of CCJEF and 21 named plaintiff schoolchildren and their parents in an education adequacy and equity lawsuit filed in November 2005. With the CT Supreme Court's ruling of March 22, that case is now moving forward to trial.

This year's annual CCJEF meeting, held at The Hartford Lyceum, focused on the Supreme Court ruling and featured commentary on the decision by the 97-year-old author of the Connecticut constitution's education clause, Judge Simon Bernstein. State Historian Emeritus Christopher Collier, a prolific writer whose most recent opus chronicles the history of Connecticut education from 1650-2000, also commented on the decision. Bernstein and Collier, who previously had co-authored an amicus brief in behalf of CCJEF's appeal to the State Supreme Court, were honored for their historic contributions to Connecticut schoolchildren.

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