



Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding

February 12, 2008

To: Members of the General Assembly
From: Steve Cassano, CCJEF Executive Director
Dianne Kaplan deVries, CCJEF Project Director
Re: CCJEF's education lawsuit now before the CT Supreme Court

As the General Assembly's work gets underway, we felt it imperative to inform you that the *CCJEF v Rell* education adequacy and equity lawsuit is now before the Connecticut Supreme Court on expedited appeal of an adverse pre-trial ruling. By the summer, the Court will consider and determine fundamental questions as to what the Connecticut Constitution guarantees to the schoolchildren of our state. That decision will likely be its most significant education ruling in over a decade, since *Sheff v O'Neill*.

Immediately after the Supreme Court decision is handed down, preparations for trial will proceed apace, either on both the adequacy and equity claims, or on equity grounds alone, should the Court fail to reverse the lower court's decision striking down the adequacy claims.

CCJEF strongly believes the Supreme Court will agree that the trial court decision was unprecedented, premature, and a significant narrowing of the constitution's education clause. CCJEF believes — as presumably do most legislators, employers, educators, and parents — that the constitution's education clause guarantees to our children the right to a substantive, quality education that gives them the opportunity to gain meaningful employment, access higher education, and become responsible and actively engaged citizens.

Over the past year or so, many of you have indicated an interest in becoming better informed of our work, with an eye to becoming advocates for the issues we espouse and advising on ways in which we can all work together to bolster the public education system even as the lawsuit moves forward through the courts. To that end, CCJEF will begin hosting small gatherings of legislators to discuss school funding issues as they impact local school districts and the state as a whole. Critical school funding information for the municipalities in your legislative district will be provided and carefully examined. Together we can explore how better to move these issues forward expeditiously and on a bipartisan basis.

If you are interested in joining us at one or more of these upcoming roundtables (some in Hartford, others scattered geographically across the state), please contact us by return email or phone.

Meanwhile, best wishes for a productive session. The work of the General Assembly in this and past sessions will be of significant import to the Supreme Court as it decides the degree of judicial involvement that is necessary to vindicate the rights of our children. Please also keep in mind that there is no greater a short- or long-term economic stimulus package than investing in quality public education.