

## Lawyers' Petition Re: Stenographers

The following is a letter by James M. Carroll to NH Supreme Court Chief Justice John T. Broderick, Jr. (A slightly edited version of this letter was published in the July 23 *Bar News*.) A petition signed by 39 Belknap County attorneys, members of the county bar association, accompanied the letter. [Click here](#) for a response written by Chief Justice Broderick to Attorney Carroll. The letter, dated July 14, was not received by *Bar News* in time to be published in the July 23 issue.

During the past week, I have spoken with one of the Court Stenographers in Belknap County, Debra Mekula. I am concerned about the Court's decision to terminate the use of Court Stenographers. I must confess that I have not studied the court's policy to introduce court monitors and to utilize that method exclusively.

I understand that this conversion is being implemented to adjust the fiscal demands of recording and transcribing proceedings. From a fiscal prospective, I am sure that this transition makes sense. However, based upon my understanding that the processing of transcripts will be by outsourcing them, I believe that the procuring of transcripts will be more difficult from the perspective of timeliness.

Further, I firmly believe that stenographic recording is the most accurate memorialization. This accuracy is preserved by the familiarity between litigators and the stenographic staff.

I am not speaking as to the work or competency of the monitors. In my observation, the use of monitors gives our Court clerks assistance in the office during breaks from trial work.

We of the Bar are all too aware of the limitation of court personnel and office availability due to fiscal restraints. However, what is particularly disturbing is the fact that the stenographers will be replaced not by attrition but by termination. These people, particularly Ms. Mekula, have been diligent, conscientious, and professional employees of our court system. She has invested her own monies in order to maintain the highest level of efficiency, competence, and technological currency.

It is my understanding that Debbie and others have received confirmation that their positions will be terminated as of June, 2005.

This plan bears only money considerations. It bears no semblance to the justice that our judicial system is based upon.

I recognize that there is litigation pending on this issue, and I recognize that you will not be addressing this issue directly.

I have asked my fellow Bar Members to join me in identifying our objection to the present plan for termination of these dedicated employees and in recommending a process of attrition which will preserve with honor and fundamental fairness the present employees in their present positions until retirement.

I thank you for your careful consideration in this matter.

*James M. Carroll*

The petition was also signed by:

Philip P. Bonafide  
Jessica C. Brown  
Robert A. Dietz  
Rodney N. Dyer  
Jesse Friedman  
Charles W. Gallagher  
John P. Giere  
Dorcas J. Gordon  
Thomas M. Haughhey  
Robert L. Hemeon  
Edmund S. Hibbard  
Marshall D. Hickok  
James Lafrance

Warren F. Lake  
Mark H. Lamper  
Stephen J. Laurent  
Amy Mayhew  
Edgar D. McKean, III  
Janice McLaughlin  
Philip McLaughlin  
Peter V. Millham  
Teresa Mahoney Mullen  
Regina A. Nadeau  
Alvin E. Nix  
Lauren J. Noether

Paul L. Normandin  
A.G. O'Neil, Jr.  
John O'Shea  
David S. Osman  
William Philpot, Jr.  
Bennette Pizzimenti  
Anne M. Rice  
Margaret M. Sullivan  
Angela C. Trethaway  
Suzanne M. Weldon-Francke  
Patrick H. Wood  
William O. Woodbury