

Letter by Jennifer Berkenstock

Published in the *Rivereast News* on September 3, 2010

Hello,

While campaigning for Judge of Probate, I have enjoyed speaking with many of you about your questions and concerns about Probate Courts. One important question is whether the new consolidated court for our district will lower its level of service because of its larger size. Some are concerned that the court will become impersonal and uncaring.

You can be assured that as your new Judge, I will make personal service a top priority. I will be accessible to answer questions and to make sure cases move along quickly. Many of my neighbors in East Hampton know me already, since I have lived here for 22 years. And regardless of whether I know you personally, I will treat every person with compassion and respect.

The staffing levels will remain the same as the courts have now—it will just be consolidated into one location. Our new court is funded for 88 hours of clerk time and will be open 40 hours per week. So we will have at least 2 clerks on staff at all times to help people who come into the court.

The court hearings will still be conducted in the same informal, private way that they have been in the past. Probate hearings usually involve sensitive family issues like beneficiary disputes, parental rights cases and mental capacity cases. These hearings are held in a private conference room with only the parties involved, and not in a large public courtroom, so your privacy is protected.

You may find that the level of service is actually better because of the court consolidation. And if you vote for me to be your Judge, I will do my very best to make sure that happens.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Berkenstock, Candidate for Judge of Probate for East Hampton, Portland, Marlborough and East Haddam