

CHIEF JUSTICE CHASE T. ROGERS
Diversity Week Opening Celebration
October 19, 2015

Justice Robinson, thank you for your kind remarks. It is a pleasure to be here, and I appreciate all that you and the members of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Competency did to organize today's event.

I understand that there was a huge demand to attend this program and that the seats filled up quickly. This type of participation is evidence to me that we have made progress in the area of increasing cultural competency. However, as we all know, there is more work to be done, and your agenda provides a good road map of topics that should be discussed.

Meanwhile, I would like to update you on our progress since last year. Regarding with the Branch's work force, we have worked hard over the past several years to increase diversity, since it is essential that we represent the face of the people we serve. As a result, I am pleased

to report that we continue to increase the diversity of our workforce and at the end of 2014, 1,261 employees, or 31.2%, were minorities. However, there is still much more work to be done in this area, and we will continue our recruitment efforts.

We also are continuing our work with the affinity bar associations to increase the number of minority judges. I am pleased to report to you that the percentage of minority judges serving in our state courts continues to increase and is at 21%. I have full confidence that this number will continue to increase.

By way of background, President Obama appointed me in 2011 to the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute. One of the jobs of the institute is to foster innovative, efficient solutions to common issues faced by the courts. I am also a member of the Conference of Chief Justices, which also does substantial work on how to effectively address common issues. I'm pleased to report that the conference this year and in conjunction with the Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness, voted to

approve a national engagement strategy for enhancing minorities' trust and confidence in the court system.

Moreover, the State Justice Institute will fund a diverse national task force charged with developing a dialogue among court leaders and minority community representatives in order to identify approaches to be tested by local courts and community groups.

I want to just say a few words about the consortium. Its role is to assist in implementing programs and recommendations, and to serve as a central forum for the exchange of information relative to identifying and eliminating racial and ethnic bias in the courts. We have Connecticut's own Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity Commission, which is chaired by esteemed colleague, Justice Lubbie Harper, Jr. Suffice it to say, I intend to be very involved in this initiative, with the goal of taking concrete and measurable steps to increase public trust and confidence our court system. As part of that task, we will listen to the concerns that are expressed and

look forward to constructive dialogue on the national, state and local levels to address the matter.

I also wanted to take a moment to recognize each of you for taking the time to attend today's event. It is vitally important that you're here, and moreover, that you take today's information back to your colleagues who could not attend. In addition, I don't always get the opportunity to thank you on a broader scale for all that you do for the Judicial Branch. Please know that I appreciate your dedication, day in and day out and I'm acutely aware of your efforts.

Thank you again for being here, and I hope you enjoy the rest of the program.

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