

**The New London County Bar Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 97
Yantic, CT 06389
Phone and Fax: (860) 889-9384**

*For Immediate Release
May 2, 2008*

**Press Release from the New London County Bar Association:
Judge Susan B. Handy Receives 2008 Liberty Bell Award**

On May 1, 1958 President Dwight D. Eisenhower instituted Law Day to strengthen our great heritage of liberty, justice, and equality under the law. Since then Law Day observances have become a major part of the bar association year in state and local bar associations throughout the country and we at the New London County Bar Association are proud to be a part of this celebration.

As part of our annual Law Day celebration we select an individual for the Liberty Bell Award. The Liberty Bell Award was established by the Michigan State Bar Association Young Lawyers Section in 1963. In 1964 the American Bar Association's Board of Governors endorsed the award nationwide. Among the criteria used in selecting the honoree by the New London County Bar Association are:

- Promoted better understanding of the rule of law,
- Encouraged a greater respect for law and the courts,
- Stimulated a sense of civic responsibility, and
- Contributed to good government in the community.

This year, the American Bar Association designated the "The Rule of Law: Foundation for Communities of Opportunity and Equity." as our Law Day theme. "The nature of the judicial system is critical to the rule of law. Impartial judges, governed by clear legal rules, committed to enforcing the rules as written, independent of political influence are essential if law is to be a reliable guide to individuals and a constraint on those in power."

"The rule of law holds that if our relationships with each other and with the state are governed by a set of rules, rather than by a group of individuals, we are less likely to fall victim to authoritarian rule. The rule of law calls for both individuals and the government to submit to the law's supremacy." The rule of law exists to protect and restrain individuals and the government, ensuring equal treatment for all. Beginning with the Magna Carta, and continuing through the Charter Oak incident (1687), in which the people of Connecticut sought to preserve their rights from arbitrary royal power, through to the American Revolution, and the drafting of the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights, through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, to the struggles of our brothers and sisters in the Pakistan Bar, fighting to keep an independent judiciary, to today, the idea that the Rule of Law will be upheld and that the laws exist for all the

people, to be applied equally and without bias or favoritism, has been one of the guiding principles of our nation.

As lawyers the members of the New London County Bar see the rule of law in action every day. In the daily disputes that make up much of our business, in the divorce courts, in the criminal courts, in the jury system where citizens have a say in enforcing our law, in contract disputes, in personal injury actions, and in the commercial and real estate transactions that allow commerce to flourish. Sadly, we often take the rule of law, like the air around us, for granted. Just as air is necessary to life, the rule of law is necessary to ensure a free and just society. Sometimes it takes a dramatic incident to focus our attention on the vital elements necessary for this to continue.

On October 11, 2007, one day before serial rapist David Pollitt was to be released after serving his full sentence, Governor Rell wrote to Attorney General Blumenthal and asked him to confine Mr. Pollitt beyond his legal discharge date. Sadly, the Attorney General did not take the opportunity to educate the Governor on the principles that govern all of us. Instead, he filed, without standing, a motion in the Superior Court to delay Pollitt's release. Later that day, Judge Handy dismissed the motion, saying that Mr. Pollitt had "served his sentence" and "...is entitled to freedom, having paid his debt to society." She ruled that he was "entitled to be released." Judge Handy's ruling went against the wishes of Governor and the Attorney General but was supported by Chief State's Attorney Kevin Kane, and New London State's Attorney Michael Regan.

Unfortunately, Judge Handy's wisdom in enforcing the law to guarantee the rights of one of society's least popular members drew unwarranted criticism. The duty of a judge to enforce the law, neutrally and fairly, should not be a controversial one, but all too often it is. The release of Mr. Pollitt was not a hard legal call, but, given the outraged rhetoric surrounding the end of his sentence, it was a difficult political one. While judges are expected to be above politics, the sad reality is that oftentimes it is difficult to challenge popular sentiment. When Judge Handy dismissed the Attorney General's motion, she displayed no small courage. The extensive media presence in the courtroom that day made it clear that her decision would draw much criticism, which it did. It also, rightly, received much praise. We in the New London County Bar wanted to add our voices to that praise. Few people in society know better the importance of an impartial judiciary enforcing the law, and we felt that presenting Judge Handy with the Liberty Bell award this year would show our support for her action, and for the rule of law that protects us all.

"Judge Handy exemplifies the type of judge we need on the bench," said Attorney Mary Puhlick, President of the New London County Bar Association. "In this particular case, she upheld the rule of law and then was criticized for her decision. Rather than criticize Judge Handy, the State of Connecticut should be grateful for a judge who protects the constitutional rights of all who appear before her."

Honorable Susan B. Handy

1971 B.S. University of Massachusetts, Amherst

1980 J.D. University of Connecticut

1972-1978, New London High School, English and Speech Teacher

1980, admitted to the Connecticut bar

1980 - 1993, associate/partner Conway, Londregan, Leuba, McNamara, now Conway, Londregan

1993, appointed to the bench, Gov. Weicker

2001, reappointed to second term

In her over 15 years on the bench Judge Handy sat in the criminal, civil, juvenile courts; her assignments have included Hartford, New Britain, Willimantic, and New London.