



STATE OF CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

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FAQs Regarding Closure of Bristol Courthouse

- 1) Why is the Judicial Branch planning to close the courthouse?

The Judicial Branch takes seriously its obligation to allocate its resources in the most effective manner, and positioning our employees to best serve the public is our top priority. As such, the Judicial Branch has determined that it can transfer the cases that are currently being handled by the Bristol Geographical Area No. 17 Courthouse to the nearby New Britain Judicial District courthouse (the New Britain Geographical Area No. 15 Courthouse).

- 2) How much money will closing the courthouse save?

This move will save \$146,776 that the Judicial Branch pays annually to lease GA 17 from the City of Bristol. As noted above, however, the determining factor in the decision is how best to allocate staff.

- 3) Are you considering closing any other courthouses?

No.

- 4) What is the caseload at GA 17 in Bristol?

GA 17 had 4,524 cases added from 7/1/2017 to 6/30/2018; 4,278 from 7/1/2016 to 6/30/2017; and 4,746 from 7/1/2015 to 6/30/2016. GA 17 heard an average of 112 cases per day over the last fiscal year.

- 5) From what towns does GA 17 receive cases?

GA 17 covers the City of Bristol and the towns of Burlington, Plainville, Plymouth and Southington. It primarily handles misdemeanors and lesser felonies; serious felonies are transferred to the New Britain Judicial District.

- 6) What is the caseload at GA 15 in New Britain?

GA 15 had 27,227 cases added from 7/1/2017 to 6/30/2018; 25,792 from 7/1/2016 to 6/30/2017; and 33,557 from 7/1/2015 to 6/30/2016. These numbers include infractions for all three years.

7) From what towns does GA 15 receive cases?

GA 15 covers the City of New Britain and the towns of Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield.

8) Can GA 15 in New Britain handle the increase?

GA 15 will be getting 17 percent more cases and can handle the increase. There are enough courtrooms to handle the additional cases, and there is enough space in the courthouse to increase the number of employees needed to address the increased caseload.

9) How much money and staff resources will be saved by closing the courthouse?

The most obvious savings is the annual cost of leasing the building for \$146,776. Beyond that, we will achieve other significant savings, in that we will be able to more efficiently use our scarce staff resources.

10) Will anyone lose their job?

No Judicial Branch employee will lose his/her job.

11) How many people work in the Bristol courthouse and in what capacities?

There are currently 18 Judicial Branch employees and one judge working at the Bristol courthouse. The staff breakdown is as follows: seven judicial marshals; four clerk's office staff; three bail commissioner staff; two family relations staff; one interpreter and one victim advocate.

There are currently six employees who work for the public defender (three attorneys, one social worker, one investigator and one clerical position).

There are 5.5 full-time equivalent employees who work for the state's attorney.

There are a total of 30.5 full-time equivalent employees who work in the Bristol courthouse.

12) Is probation moving from Bristol?

No. The Adult Probation Office at 225 N. Main St. in Bristol will remain open, and probationers should continue to report there unless their probation officer informs them otherwise.

13) What about juvenile matters?

Juvenile matters from Bristol are already heard in the New Britain Judicial District courthouse. As such, there will be no impact.

14) What about trials?

Any criminal trials originating from the Bristol courthouse are already transferred to the New Britain Judicial District courthouse. As such, there will be no impact.

15) Does GA 15 in New Britain offer services that GA 17 in Bristol does not have?

Yes. GA 15 has a public information desk and a court service center; GA 17 does not. The Public Information Desk is staffed daily during the busy morning hours; the Court Service Center is staffed full time. Court service centers and public information desks provide services for self-represented parties, members of the bar and the community at large.

16) How far of a drive is it to GA 15 in New Britain from GA 17 in Bristol?

GA 17 in Bristol is 9.9 miles from GA 15 in New Britain. For Plainville and Southington, the distance to GA 15 is shorter than to GA 17. For Bristol, Burlington and Plymouth, the distance to GA 15 is not greater than 10 miles as compared to the distance to GA 17.

17) What about public transportation?

There is public transportation to New Britain from Bristol, Plainville and Southington.

CTfastrak picks up passengers directly in front of GA 17 in Bristol approximately every 20 minutes and brings passengers to downtown New Britain via Plainville.

Although there is no public transportation to New Britain from Burlington and Plymouth, it is worth noting that there currently also is no public transportation to Bristol from Burlington and Plymouth.

18) How long has the Judicial Branch leased the space at GA 17 from the City of Bristol?

Since 1980. It is important to note that the Bristol courthouse was opened before the New Britain Judicial District was established. The towns now served by the New Britain Judicial District were part of the Hartford Judicial District, and as such, members of the public, attorneys and law enforcement had to drive into Hartford for all court business. That need is no longer there because of the establishment of the New Britain Judicial District, pursuant to Public Act 88-230. The New Britain Judicial District became operational in 1998.

State law currently requires that the court sit not less than 40 weeks in Bristol. However, the Judicial Branch will seek a legislative change to eliminate that provision.