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SUPPLEMENTAL COMMENTS OF ROBERT A. SOLOMON*

Many of the civil legal services in Connecticut are provided by three regional agencies. When most of Connecticut’s legal services programs merged into a single program during the 1970s, creating Connecticut Legal Services, New Haven and Hartford resisted, fearing a loss of control and potential loss of funding. Resisting merger did in fact benefit New Haven and Hartford, as these communities now have more civil legal aid resources than any other city in relation to need.

One of the hardest problems facing legal aid organizations is access versus impact, or as it was formerly referred to, survive versus law reform. Emphasizing numbers of cases being dealt with by legal aid can be misleading, as it concentrates on quantity and not quality of cases. The big impact case often requires far more lawyer hours of work than the usual small case, which is part of the problem in determining the relative emphasis legal aid gives to access compared to impact. Another aspect of the problem is that impact cases may require somewhat different lawyer skills and competence than do typical access cases.¹

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1. Following the Solomon remarks, Alan Houseman said that both the ABA and the Legal Services Corporation are giving attention to the problem raised by Professor Solomon. The ABA is doing so in pending revisions of its Standards for Legal Services to the poor, and the Legal Services Corporation is doing so in its ongoing revisions of its performance criteria. How significant these changes will be remains to be seen. Obviously, those legal aid agencies restricted by federal funding limitations are limited in the range of impact efforts they may pursue.