

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Honorable Mike Beebe
Governor
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

Re: Drug Court Treatment funds

Dear Governor Beebe:

On behalf of the Circuit Court Judges that sit on the specialized dockets for the Arkansas Drug Court Program, and as chair of the Drug Court Judges Committee of the Arkansas Judicial Council, I am writing to request your assistance in the current crisis affecting the courts.

During the 2007 Legislative Session, the Drug Court Judges were successful in securing an appropriation of \$3 million per annum to be used exclusively by the drug courts for treatment of drug court participants. When agencies got their final funding levels, this amount was reduced in the Department of Community Corrections' budget to \$2,853,000.

During the 2008 spring conference of drug court judges, DCC approached the judges and requested an agreement to accept only the first half of the funding for FY 2008 (\$1.5 million) to help DCC address the necessary cuts you were requesting of approximately 7% across the board. We were assured that DCC would work to get the funding fully restored in January after state revenues might stabilize. This has not materialized.

In our emergency meeting on February 13, 2009, in an effort to be good fiscal stewards, the judges voted to place a moratorium on future treatment expenditures since it appeared that funding would soon run out. Because the providers have been willing to continue current patients in treatment, to my knowledge, no drug court participants have been kicked out of a treatment program. However, most drug courts meet once a week. Without access to treatment funding, we will likely soon have to suspend our programs until next July.

I know I do not have to express the success of the drug court programs to you since you have been a huge supporter of the program since its onset in the early 1990s. However, we are truly in a situation where we need your assistance by restoring funding to this

critical program for its continued success. Since 2007, we have expanded the number of drug court programs to 41 and are serving approximately 250 more participants annually. For every participant being served in the drug court program, we are saving the state of Arkansas thousands of dollars in continued criminal activity and incarceration costs. Drug and alcohol addiction is an illness. Without access to treatment dollars, the drug court programs are left with only a hollow promise to these participants. Following my signature is the complete listing of all the sitting drug court judges in our state.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance to you in this matter or if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Joe E. Griffin

Drug Court Judges

Hon. Bentley Story – 1st Judicial Circuit – Forrest City
Hon. Randy Philhours – 2nd Judicial Circuit - Paragould
Hon. Phil Smith– 3rd Judicial District –Pocahontas
Hon. Mary Ann Gunn – 4th Judicial Circuit -Fayetteville
Hon. Dennis Sutterfield – 5th Judicial Circuit - Russellville
Hon. Mary McGowan – 6th Judicial Circuit – Little Rock
Hon. Chris Williams - 7th Judicial Circuit - Malvern
Hon. Joe Griffin – 8th S. Judicial Circuit - Texarkana
Hon. Charles Yeargan – 9th W. Judicial Circuit - Murfreesboro
Hon. Don Glover – 10th Judicial Circuit - McGehee
Hon. Sam Pope -10th Judicial Circuit - Hamburg
Hon. Bynum Gibson - 10th Judicial Circuit - Monticello
Hon. David Henry – 11th E. Judicial Circuit – Arkansas County -Stuttgart
Hon. Berlin Jones -11th W. Judicial Circuit – Jefferson County –Pine Bluff
Hon. J. Michael Fitzhugh – 12th Judicial Circuit – Sebastian County – Fort Smith
Hon. Larry Chandler – 13th Judicial Circuit -Magnolia
Hon. Edwin Keaton - 13th Judicial Circuit -Camden
Hon. Carol Anthony – 13th Judicial Circuit – El Dorado
Hon. Gordon Webb – 14th Judicial Circuit - Harrison
Hon. John Dan Kemp -16th Judicial Circuit – Mountain View
Hon. Craig Hannah – 17th Judicial Circuit -Searcy
Hon. John Homer Wright – 18th E. Judicial Circuit - Hot Springs
Hon. J.W. Looney – 18th W. Judicial Circuit -Mena
Hon. Jay Finch -19th W. Judicial Circuit – Benton County - Bentonville
Hon. Charles E. Clawson, Jr. – 20th Judicial Circuit - Conway
Hon. Gary Cottrell – 21st Judicial Circuit – Crawford County –Van Buren
Hon. Gary Arnold – 22nd Judicial Circuit – Saline County - Benton
Hon. Phillip Whiteaker – 23rd Judicial Circuit – Lonoke County - Lonoke

