

TOWN OF MACHIAS

POST OFFICE BOX 87
3483 ROSZYK HILL ROAD
MACHIAS, NY 14101

PHONE
716.353.8207
FAX
716.353.8234

TOWN SUPERVISOR
Steve Cornwall
716.560.9178
machias.supervisor@wny.twcbc.com

TOWN CLERK
Rebecca Grimmelt
machias.clerk@wny.twcbc.com

TOWN BOARD
Tom Reese
Frank Bork
Robert Green
Robert Shenk

SUPT. OF HIGHWAYS
Tim Byroads
716.353.8851

TOWN JUSTICES
Francis Lounsbury
Denise Richards

TOWN ASSESSOR
Daniel Martonis
716-938-2324

TOWN CONSTABLES
Kim Chase
Tim Chase

TOWN ATTORNEY
Joel Kurtzhalts
716-652-9560

WATER COMMISSIONER
Randy Jansen
716-560-7575

DATE August 21, 2023

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 50 YEAR: 2023

MOVED BY: Steve Cornwall SECOND BY: Tom Reese

TITLE: ***RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO NEW YORK STATE SENATE BILL S-00139B and ASSEMBLY BILL A-1358B***

WHEREAS, New York Senate Bill number S-00139B has been passed which, if adopted by the NYS Assembly (A 1358-B) and signed by the Governor, would require all Judges presiding in the 100 largest Town and Village Courts to be licensed to practice law in the State and to have been admitted to the NYS Bar for at least five years; and

WHEREAS, The Town and Village Courts in Cattaraugus County are among the nearly 1,200 Justice Courts in the State of New York that collectively handle close to 1 million cases each year; and

WHEREAS, The Town and Village Courts are known as the "Courts Closest to the People" and have broad jurisdiction, presiding over civil and criminal matters, thereby performing a vital role in the New York State Unified Court System; and

WHEREAS, The Town Court of Machias is a vital service to our residents and the Cattaraugus County community as a whole; and

WHEREAS, The Justices in Cattaraugus County's Town and Village Courts have pledged to be ever mindful of their neutrality and impartiality, and render equal justice to all, while continually adhering to judicial rules of ethics and pronouncements of the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct; and

WHEREAS, The Justices are required to be on-call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to review/sign arrest and search warrants, perform arraignments, and issue orders of protection; and

WHEREAS, The Justices of Town and Village Courts ensure that the rights afforded to defendants by the Constitutions of the United States and the State of New York are provided and protected; and

WHEREAS, The Justices of Town and Village Courts preside over trials involving misdemeanor and violation level offenses, thereby ensuring that the victims of those offenses can be heard; and

WHEREAS, The Town and Village Courts provide a venue for Citizens to pursue a low-cost and efficient procedure for individuals to resolve civil disputes and landlord/tenant matters; and

WHEREAS, the Justices also preside nightly and on weekends and holidays, ensuring that arrested citizens are promptly afforded legal representation, the opportunity to plead to alleged charges, and to be considered for release, bail, or incarceration; and]

WHEREAS, The Justices continually strive to improve the administration of justice through participation in mandatory education programs, seminars, meetings of the Cattaraugus County Magistrates Association and the New York State Magistrates Association; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Office of Court Administration must certify all as having successfully completed mandatory training both following election and in each subsequent year; and

WHEREAS, The New York State's Commission on Judicial Conduct's most recent annual report (2023) identifies that only 13% of the complaints filed against the judiciary were against Town and Village judges while the remaining complaints were against either "State-paid" judges, (constituting approximately 40% of the judiciary) who accounted for approximately 67% of the complaints received, or against non-judicial entities (20%); and

WHEREAS, the Justices also preside nightly and on weekends and holidays, ensuring that arrested citizens are promptly afforded legal representation, the opportunity to plead to alleged charges, and to be considered for release, bail, or incarceration; and]

WHEREAS, This Bill attempts to usurp the right of voters to elect those in their communities that they believe to be fair and impartial, and who would best serve that community, whether they be attorneys or non-attorneys; and

WHEREAS, This Bill implicitly suggests that members of a community are incapable of making informed decisions about who should sit in judgment of matters from the straight-forward to the highly complex as may arise in their local courts; and

WHEREAS, this legislative body views the intention of this Bill is not to actually improve the courts, but a blatant and unconscionable attempt by the New York State Bar Association, an organization that represents approximately only fifteen percent (15%) of the State's attorneys, to generate increased opportunities for its members, and to dictate who voters may choose to serve in our local governments;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Governing board of the Town of Machias strongly, and in unequivocal terms, calls on both the leadership in the Senate and Assembly, and the Governor to reject this poorly conceived and hastily fashioned seizure of voters' rights to determine, for themselves, who they would choose to sit as their judges as has been the case for almost two hundred years.

The resolution as stated above is hereby adopted by a majority vote of the Town of Machias Town Board at an official meeting held on the ___21st_____day of _August_ in the year__2023___, the ayes and nays take and recorded below:

__Aye___ Stephen J. Cornwall, Supervisor

__Aye___ Tom Reese, Councilman

__Aye___ Robert Shenk, Councilman

__Absent_ Robert Green, Councilman

__Aye___ Frank Bork, Councilman

CERTIFIED: _____

Rebecca Grimmelt, Clerk
Town of Machias