

Legislative Recommendations on Court Security

Office of Court Administration
Texas Judicial Council

Court Security Legislative Recommendations

- Establish position of Director of Security and Emergency Preparedness at OCA.
- Require court security committees be established at the local level.
- Increase security incident reporting across the state.
- Require those responsible for providing court security to be certified with specialized training.
- Shield judges' personal information from public access such as telephone numbers and home addresses in appraisal records and ethics reports.
- Require new Judges receive security training.
- Increase funding to local law enforcement and DPS to cover essential security costs.

In February 2016, the Texas Judicial Council established the Court Security Committee to assess the status of court security in the state to ensure that Texas courts remain a safe and open place for individuals to access justice. The committee identified seven legislative recommendations.

Background

The shooting of Travis County District Judge Julie Kocurek in the fall of 2015 provided a grave reminder of the need to act with urgency. Upon returning to her home with her family shortly after 10 pm on November 6, 2015, Travis County District Judge Julie Kocurek was shot in her driveway. Judge Kocurek was hospitalized for several months recovering from injuries from the attempted assassination before returning to the bench on February 29, 2016.

On September 23, 2016, federal authorities announced charges against three individuals in connection with the shooting, one of whom had a probation revocation proceeding pending in Judge Kocurek's court at the time of the shooting.

While the horrible events from November 2015 were not the first court security incident to occur in Texas, the event has reminded the judiciary of the importance of ensuring that judges and court personnel are protected as each carries out administering justice.

Security Survey

In January 2016, more than 1000 judges from across the state responded to a survey produced by the Office of Court Administration regarding Court Security. The results of the survey include:

- Over one-third feel that the quality of security in their courthouse is poor
- 62% indicate that no security plan exists for their courthouse
- Nearly two-thirds report that no court security training has been provided in their courthouse
- 43% report that the public can enter the courthouse from more than one entrance
- 57% indicate that the public can move unrestricted within the courthouse
- 43% report that there are no personnel to screen at any entrance to their courthouse

Top Needs for Security

1. Point of entry screening
2. Security and emergency preparedness training
3. Judge and judicial officer movement in the courthouse
4. Physical Security Systems
5. Law enforcement officer/court security training



The Texas Judicial Council was created in 1929 by the 41st Legislature and is the policy-making body for the state judiciary. It examines the work accomplished by the courts and submits recommendations for improvement of the system to the Legislature, the Governor and the Supreme Court.