



International Brotherhood of Police Officers

A DIVISION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

House Bill 5495
Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing: 3/18/16

PLEASE SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 5495 -- AAC ENHANCED PENALTIES FOR THREATENING A JUDGE.

The International Brotherhood of Police Officers (IBPO) represents thousands of law enforcement professionals and other first responders across the country, including members who work in several towns here in Connecticut.

Our union currently represents 658 men and women who serve in our courthouses, prisoner lockup facilities and prisoner transport units across the state of Connecticut.

In the past, we have had as many as 900 Judicial marshals providing protection across our judicial system, but due to attrition and budget shortfalls, we have lost 200 plus judicial marshals; and it has been stated during budget discussions that another 50 or so judicial marshals may soon be laid-off.

At the same time that we have been losing judicial marshals, our courthouses have become increasingly more busy. Thousands of people are entering our courthouses every day; and we believe that we are now at a critical juncture where the potential security risks in our system are starting to exceed the current number of judicial marshals' ability to provide the highest quality protections and services. In February, the Courthouse in Danielson was evacuated and closed down during to a security threat; and there was another recent incident where Judge Bozzuto was threatened by an upset court litigant. Every day we should all be working together to make our courthouses safe places for every person to present their cases to our judges.

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) states on its website:

Because courthouses must be accessible and in centralized locations, they are vulnerable to acts of random violence. Courts must have proper court security procedures, technology, personnel, and architectural features, to not only protect the safety of the people and the property within and around the courts, but also the integrity of the judicial process.

We cannot invite people to address their grievances in our civil courts, and we cannot require people accused of crimes to come to our criminal courts to answer the state's claims and defend themselves, unless we can ensure that all of these people will be safe and ensure that their cases will be handled fairly and efficiently.

We support HB 5495; and we thank the Judiciary Committee for addressing the safety and protection of the people who work in our courthouses and who visit our courthouses.

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