

Judicial and Court Staff Safety

- The Minnesota Judicial Branch (MJB) and the Minnesota District Judges Association (MDJA) jointly support the Judicial and Court Staff Safety and Privacy Act: SF 4200, chief authored by Senator Limmer; and HF 4326, chief authored by Representative Curran.

*“The **chronic stress** of . . . safety threats . . . negatively impacts [my] sleep, cognition and well-being.”*

 - Minnesota Judicial Officer,
MDJA Judicial Safety Survey (additional results on page 2).
- The safety of Minnesota’s Judges, court staff, and members of their households are put at risk by the dissemination and perpetual Internet access of home addresses and personal information. Mirroring the Federal Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act passed by Congress last year, the Judicial and Court Staff Safety and Privacy Act will alleviate these safety concerns.

*“[I have] [r]eceived death threats [against] my family and me over social media, email, and phone. . . . They drove around my house a few times. . . . I had to report it to my children’s school so someone could monitor my children for a while, since these **threats included to kill my children** and they knew where they went to school.*

 - Minnesota Judicial Officer,
MDJA Judicial Safety Survey
- The Judicial and Court Staff Safety and Privacy Act will allow judicial officials to have their personal information classified as private; prohibit its dissemination; and prescribe penalties for publishing a judge’s personal information with the intent to threaten, intimidate, harass, or physically injure.

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JUDICIAL SAFETY SURVEY

In January 2024, the Minnesota District Court Judges Association conducted a survey to better understand the experiences and safety concerns of state judicial officers. 239 judges responded, which included current and retired district court judges and appellate judges. Their answers confirm that Minnesota is not immune from the nationwide outbreak of violence and threats directed against judicial officers. Violence and threats of violence occur not only in our courthouses but at judges' personal residences and in the community. These threats are often directed at judicial officers' families, including children. The following is a summary of their responses.

Fast Stats

- Nearly 90% of responding judges have received inappropriate communications because of their work. 72% have received threats.
- 37% of judges have witnessed an attempted or actual physical attack while performing their job.
- Over 75% of responding judges worry about their safety because of their work “often” or “sometimes.” Most of these judges report that their worries negatively affect their judicial wellness and job satisfaction. Similar levels of concern are expressed for the safety of the judges' family members.
- 72% of responding judges have changed their personal behaviors – such as avoiding public events – because of concern for their safety.
- 46% of responding judges' family members have expressed they felt unsafe because of the judge's work.
- Over 80% of judges have taken steps to limit/protect their personal information.
- Nearly 100% of judges who have taken steps to increase their personal safety – such as by limiting personal information – have done so using their own money.¹

Noteworthy Comments

- Many judges noted an uptick in threatening behavior toward judges in recent years.
- Several judges shared threats against their minor children: pictures of a judge's minor children were posted online; a death threat was made against a judge's children, which noted they knew where the children went to school; and one judge stated, “[t]hreats to harm my children were particularly concerning. My children's school was only 3 blocks from the courthouse and they were prevented from walking to my work after school (to get home) because of the threat. I recall running into chambers and tearing up[.]”
- Many judges noted death threats. One stated that, “[t]he threats have involved very specific forms of torture[.]”
- A judge's chambers was firebombed.
- Someone attempted to break into a judge's home, and then defecated near it. Another judge shared that someone created a fake video of a bomb exploding outside of the judge's home.
- Several judges noted that their home address has been compromised, and they have or are considering moving.

¹ When the personal safety measure had an associated cost.