

Judicature

BOLCH JUDICIAL INSTITUTE

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JUDICIAL SECURITY

Safeguarding courts and protecting judges

Efforts to strengthen security for judges and their families took on new urgency this year in the wake of the horrific murder of U.S. District Court Judge Esther Salas's son in their family home in New Jersey. But protecting judges and courts has never been more difficult or expensive. Courthouses require ever-more sophisticated security and screening equipment and procedures. Judges are subject to threats far beyond the courtroom due to the wide availability of personal information online. And the day-to-day business of the courts can be brought to a screeching halt in an instant – and held hostage for weeks – by a cyber attacker in a dark closet halfway around the world.

The pages that follow offer a case study for responding to a cyber attack (by [DAVID SLAYTON](#) of the Texas Office of Court

Administration); an overview of renewed calls for Congress to enhance laws protecting federal judges and to increase funding for updated and enhanced security measures (by Senior Judge [DAVID MCKEAGUE](#) of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit); and an outline of a new effort in the state courts to improve understanding of the state of judicial security and provide guidance to state and local courts where funding, personnel, and technical resources vary widely (by Maryland Chief Judge [MARY ELLEN BARBERA](#) and [JOSEPH BAXTER](#), state court administrator for the Supreme Court of Rhode Island). The challenges are vast, and the threats are plentiful. But as McKeague writes, "justice must be dispensed with neither fear nor favor. When judges are fearful, it impedes their ability to do their jobs" – and threatens our courts' ability to administer justice.