

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Shelia Stubbs

77TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

January 24, 2024

Assembly Bill 965—Relating to: picketing or parading at the residence of a judge with the intent to interfere with, obstruct, or impede the administration of justice or influence any judge and providing a penalty.

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good morning Chairman Representative John Spiros, Vice Chairwoman Representative Ellen Schutt, and Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 965—Relating to: picketing or parading at the residence of a judge with the intent to interfere with, obstruct, or impede the administration of justice or influence any judge and providing a penalty. I would also like to thank Representative Ron Tusler for his work on this bipartisan bill to address the serious issue of external influence on our judiciary.

I am here today to voice my strong support for AB 965 because our judicial system requires impartiality to function properly. In fulfilling their duties, the justices and judges who serve our communities and our state must make decisions based on the law and on the facts and circumstances of the cases over which they preside. To ensure that justice is served and that all people are treated fairly in our courts, these officials must remain immune to outside influences and interests.

When outside individuals or groups are allowed to apply undue pressure to justices and judges, our justice system is immediately compromised. Under current law, there is no provision to prevent the obstruction of justice caused by demonstrating at a judge's residence. This inadequacy in our statutes must be amended if we are to uphold the integrity of our courts.

Assembly Bill 965 would make it a Class A misdemeanor to picket, parade, or demonstrate at or near any residence occupied by a judge with the intent to interfere with, obstruct, or impede the administration of justice or with the intent to influence any judge in the discharge of his or her duty. A Class A misdemeanor is punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment not to exceed nine months, or both. By making it a crime for external actors to unduly influence justices and judges in the discharge of their duties, we will discourage this behavior and guarantee the trustworthiness of our courts and the verdicts they render.

Thank you for your attention to my testimony supporting this bill. To preserve our shared values in Wisconsin courts, we must protect our justices and judges from interference in the execution of their responsibilities. I ask that you vote yes for AB 965 to preserve fairness, integrity, and impartiality in our justice system. I am happy to answer any questions.

STATE CAPITOL / P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708

TELEPHONE / (608) 266-3784 TOLL FREE / (888) 534-0077 EMAIL / rep.stubbs@legis.wisconsin.gov



RON TUSLER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 3rd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 965 Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety January 24, 2024

Chair Spiros and committee members,

Today, I stand before you to advocate for a bill of utmost importance – one that seeks to protect the very pillars of our justice system: our judges. In 2022, the legal community faced a harrowing reminder of the risks judges bear in the line of duty. Judge John Roemer, a dedicated servant of the law, tragically lost his life in an attack by a criminal he had once sentenced. This incident was not just an attack on an individual, but an attack on the sanctity and security of our judicial system.

Judges are the bedrock of our legal system, making impartial decisions to uphold justice. However, their role as elected officials often leaves their personal details exposed, making them and their families vulnerable targets. This vulnerability not only threatens their safety but also the very integrity of our justice system. If judges are to make fair and unbiased decisions, they must do so without fear for their personal safety or that of their loved ones.

The bill before us today addresses this crucial need. It is not merely a set of regulations; it is a commitment to the safety and well-being of those who uphold our laws. Drawing inspiration from federal law, particularly 18 U.S. Code § 1507 – Picketing or Parading, this bill focuses on safeguarding judges' residences from disruptive activities. It explicitly forbids actions intended to disrupt justice or unduly influence judges, particularly at their homes.

The key provisions of this bill are clear and focused:

1. It adapts the prohibition of picketing, parading, or demonstrating to concentrate specifically on the residences of judges.
2. It explicitly outlaws actions intended to disrupt judicial processes or influence judges in their duties when carried out at their homes.



RON TUSLER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 3rd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

This bill strikes a delicate balance between the right to free speech and assembly and the imperative need for judges to feel secure both at home and in their constitutional responsibilities. By protecting our judges, we are not just ensuring their personal safety; we are reinforcing the integrity and effectiveness of our entire judicial system.

If judges are deterred from serving due to potential risks to their personal safety, the very foundation of our legal system is at risk. This bill is our commitment to ensuring that judges can perform their roles without fear, fostering a justice system where impartiality and security go hand in hand.

I urge you to support this bill, not just as a measure of security, but as a testament to our dedication to upholding the rule of law and protecting those who administer it. Let us stand together in safeguarding our judges, thereby ensuring a just, fair, and secure society for all.

Thank you for your consideration.



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

Leaders in the Law. Advocates for Justice.®

To: Members, Assembly Criminal Justice Committee
From: State Bar of Wisconsin
Date: January 24, 2024
Subject: Support for AB 965, 966, and 967 – judicial security

The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the passage of ABs 965, 966, and 967, bills aimed at increasing judicial security by protecting the personal information of judges and shielding their homes from public demonstrations, and we commend Representatives Tusler, Ortiz-Velez and Stubbs as well as Senators Wanggaard and Taylor for taking the lead on this important legislation.

The State Bar has long been an advocate for the protection of judges and all those involved in the justice system. We have seen with increasing frequency the threat of violence against judges and their families across the country, with the 2022 tragedy in Juneau County bringing those concerns close to home in Wisconsin. While it should not take the killing of a retired judge to draw attention and a sense of urgency to this issue, we sincerely hope that this horrific act will be a cause for change going forward, preventing another tragic situation.

Support for the protection of our courts, court personnel, and individuals that access the courts has been a longstanding position of the State Bar, but providing a sense of security outside of the court is paramount as well. AB 965 protects judges by prohibiting picketing or parading protests outside of a judge's house, providing that peace of mind to judges and their family when at home. In addition, AB 966 and AB 967 further address judges' privacy concerns by exempting personal information found in judicial security profiles from public access and allowing judges to opt out of their personal information, and that of their immediate family members, from being publicly distributed.

These proposals go a long way toward protecting judges and their families while balancing that desire for protection with access to information by the public, and the State Bar of Wisconsin asks for your support of these important pieces of legislation.

State Bar of Wisconsin Staff Contact:

Cale Battles • (608) 695-5686 • cbattles@wisbar.org

Lynne Davis • (608) 852-3603 • ldavis@wisbar.org

The State Bar of Wisconsin is the mandatory professional association, created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for attorneys who hold a Wisconsin law license. With more than 25,000 members, the State Bar aids the courts in improving the administration of justice, provides continuing legal education for its members to help them maintain their expertise, and assists Wisconsin lawyers in carrying out community service initiatives to educate the public about the legal system and the value of lawyers. For more information, visit www.wisbar.org.

212 North

Re: AB 965, 966 & 967

I am writing this statement as I need to return to Milwaukee for a scheduled hearing at 2pm. I also apologize for the handwritten statement as I planned to speak.

I am a judge in Milwaukee County. I am in support of all three Assembly Bills. I have also been in contact with my colleagues in the Milwaukee County Courts. The majority of them have weighed in and are also in support of the bills. Those that responded, no one opposes outright. Rather, a few have some questions but do believe they will be in support as well.

I personally have had threats from citizens via social media as well as specific threats from defendants. This has necessitated increased patrols on my home. While this is appreciated, it is certainly not foolproof nor is it forever. I am concerned for my safety as well as the safety of my husband and children. I have discussed this issue with colleagues statewide and I am confident that I am not alone in my concerns.

I fully support the passage of AB 965, 966 & 967.

Michelle Atkins
Milwaukee County Judge

Testimony of Hon. Scott J. Nordstrand
Circuit Judge, St. Croix County

Regarding Judicial Security Legislation (AB 965, AB 966, AB 967)
Before the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety
January 24, 2024

Good morning. Chair Spiros and members of the Committee, my name is Scott Nordstrand. I am a Circuit Judge in St. Croix County. I am here today to offer my support in favor of the three bills concerning judicial security before you today: AB 965, AB 966 and AB 967. I can also convey the support of all 31 Circuit Judges and 5 Reserve Judges in the 14 northwest Wisconsin counties of the 10th Judicial District.

I grew up in St. Croix County and have practiced law in Wisconsin and Alaska for over 36 years. In Alaska, I worked as a private civil litigator and in state government as Deputy Attorney General, Acting Attorney General and Commissioner of Administration for Governor Frank Murkowski. After returning to Wisconsin, I worked as a corporate lawyer before Governor Walker appointed me to the bench in 2019. I was elected to that position by the citizens of St. Croix County in 2020. It's the greatest professional honor of my life.

I also serve as Vice Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Wisconsin Judicial Conference. Our committee of judges is tasked with reviewing legislation

impacting the courts and—on rare occasions—offering legislation for your consideration. This is one of those rare occasions.

On June 3, 2022, retired Judge John Roemer of Juneau County was shot to death by a defendant that he had sentenced to six years in prison in 2005. Judge Roemer served as a Circuit Judge for 13 years, before retiring in 2017. By all accounts, he was a bright, thoughtful and caring judge. In his retirement letter he said: “I graciously wish to thank the citizens of the state of Wisconsin and the county of Juneau for giving me this precious opportunity to serve as their circuit court judge. It is a responsibility that, at times, I can barely fathom.” His exercise of that awesome responsibility resulted in a disgruntled defendant killing him in his own home.

Immediately following this tragedy, Chief Justice Ziegler charged the Legislative Committee with investigating possible legislation to address (and hopefully lessen) the risks faced by judges outside the courthouse. Over the last year and a half, our committee drafted three proposals with the assistance of the Legislative Reference Bureau. They are before you now, thanks to the sponsors of AB 966 and AB 967: Representatives Tusler and Ortiz-Velez and Senators Wanggaard and Taylor; and AB 965: Representatives Tusler and Stubbs and Senators Wanggaard and Taylor. We are grateful for their support of our efforts on these bills.

Every day, judges in Wisconsin face parties, witnesses and victims at some of the most desperate moments in their lives. They are angry, confused, and frustrated. Many suffer from addiction to drugs and alcohol. Others face undiagnosed or untreated mental illness.

They may be charged with a crime and facing prison or jail. They may be seeking (or opposing) an injunction for protection against domestic violence or child abuse. Their children may have been removed from their care in a child protection case. Or they may have lost custody and visitation of a child in a divorce action.

Whatever problem brought them to court, the harsh reality is—there are generally winners and losers. And the judge decides who they are. Frustration with the outcomes in court are often exacerbated by the same mental health and substance use issues that brought them to court in the first place. Some folks act out.

A year and a half ago, a criminal defendant who had threatened judges in another county was transferred to my court based on recusals. The pattern continued and he made threats of harm to me that our sheriff took as credible, given he was out of custody and his whereabouts were unknown. (It was not long after Judge Roemer was killed.) A patrol deputy was assigned to my residence

until the defendant was taken into custody after a standoff with the SWAT team for several hours at an apartment house. Owing to the threats against me, another St. Croix County judge was assigned to the case. It was ultimately plead out with conditions emphasizing substance use and mental health treatment.

The bills in this judicial security package offer three approaches to reduce the risks to judges outside the courthouse: (1) prohibiting protesting at a judge's residence, (2) limiting access to a judge's personal information and (3) keeping a judge's security profile provided to law enforcement confidential.

AB 965 makes it a Class A misdemeanor to protest at a judge's residence with the intent to obstruct administration of justice or influence a judge. A judge must make decisions based upon application of the law to the facts properly presented in court. Those decisions may not be impacted by outside influences, including protesters or expressions of public opinion. This proposal is patterned after a similar federal statute but does not include prohibit protesting at the courthouse as the federal version does.

AB 966 provides various means to help maintain the privacy of a judge's personal information, including: home address; personal phone numbers; personal email addresses; government ID numbers; banking and credit information; identity,

daycare and school information for a judge's children; non-government employment location information; marital status; and date of birth.

First, this information is made exempt from public records requests, unless the judge has waived that protection. Second, a judge can make a written request that a government agency cease posting or making this information available to the public. Third, a judge can make a similar request to any person, business or association. Fourth, a data broker is prohibited from selling or otherwise making the information available for profit. Fifth, a judge or judicial candidate may certify a home address with the Elections Commission and be exempt from providing a home address on nomination papers. If any of the information is wrongfully made available, a judge can seek injunctive relief. There is also a "good faith" safe harbor for government employees. Finally, a person commits a Class G Felony if they post the protected information on the internet with the intent to threaten the health or safety of a judge or judge's family and bodily injury or death results as a natural and probable consequence.

The Legislative Committee is currently reviewing feedback received on AB 966 to ensure the legislation provides the intended protections in a manner that enables affected government agencies to comply with the bill's requirements. We are thankful to the agencies that have reviewed the bill. The Legislative Committee is working hard to address their concerns. We are currently reviewing feedback

from the Elections Commission, the Ethics Commission, Registers of Deeds and Vital Records. In addition, we have received feedback concerning the data broker provision. We have also received the request to harmonize the definition of “judicial officer” in AB 966, as well as AB 965 and 967, with existing statutory definitions of judicial officer. We look forward to quickly identifying possible solutions and working with the bills’ legislative sponsors on the necessary technical amendments.

It’s a tall order to limit public access to information about judges, particularly where they live. Closing the barn door after the cows are out of the barn is a phrase that would resonate in my part of the state. That said, we can do what we can do to minimize the risk. I know full well that someone could wait outside the courthouse for me to leave the parking lot and follow me home. But I also know that most disgruntled parties will not. And if the internet does not make it easy to find where judges live, we might avoid a tragedy like Judge Roemer.

In my opinion, AB 967 is a no-brainer. Judges complete security profiles for law enforcement with all kinds of information about our residences and families—including house floor plans, medical history, doctors, vehicle description and license plates numbers, location of guns, pet information, alarm codes and garage door codes. Law enforcement uses the information to provide advice for improving

security and for accessing the residence in a crisis situation. So, this bill fills that gap by providing a clear exemption.

In closing, this judicial security package will not prevent all risks to Wisconsin judges outside the courthouse. But it will provide a meaningful reduction in those risks by protecting a judge's residence from improper protests, greatly reducing access to a judge's personal information and keeping sensitive judicial security information confidential. On behalf of the judges on the Legislation Committee and all 36 judges in the 10th Judicial District, I ask for your support. If you have any questions, I would be glad to take them. Thank you.

MAUREEN D. BOYLE
Chief Judge
Barron County Justice Center
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Barron, WI 54812
Telephone: (715) 537-6853
Fax: (715) 537-6269

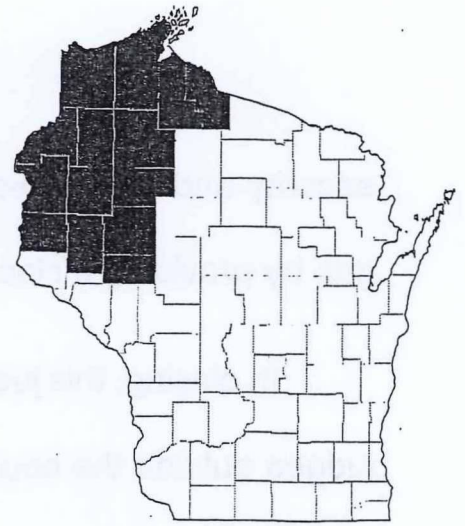
STATE OF WISCONSIN

TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

JOHN P. ANDERSON
Deputy Chief Judge
Bayfield County Courthouse
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St. Croix County Courthouse
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Hudson, WI 54016
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ROSS MUNNS
District Court Administrator
St. Croix County Courthouse
1101 Carmichael Rd., Suite 1260,
Hudson, WI 54016
Telephone: 715-245-4105



January 23, 2024

Hon. Scott Nordstrand
Br. 1 Judge, St. Croix Co.
1101 Carmichael Rd.
Hudson, WI 54016

Dear Judge Nordstrand,

I am contacting you in my capacity as Chief Judge of the District 10 Circuit Courts to thank you for providing in-person testimony regarding proposed legislation for judicial security enhancements.

Specifically, with regard to AB 965/SB 926 (Picketing and Parading), AB 967/SB 928 (Public Record Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles), and AB 966/SB 927 (Judicial Officer Privacy); Please note - all 31 judges (and five reserves) of District 10 have reviewed the elements of the proposed legislation and are in unanimous support of approval.

Based on incidents and events seen both locally and nationally in recent years, there is no question we are seeing a shift in frequency and severity of court-related threats of violence. The proposed legislation addresses areas of critical need with enhanced protections not currently in law.

Again, thank you for your work as a member of the legislative committee and representing the judiciary with testimony on these serious matters. Please contact me if you have questions or are in need of additional support.

Sincerely,

/s/ Maureen D. Boyle

Chief Judge Boyle

CC: Hon. John Anderson, Deputy Chief Judge – D10
Ross Munns, DCA District 10

ASSEMBLY PUBLIC HEARING
COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

January 24, 2024 – 10:01 a.m.

415 Northwest

Re: Assembly Bill 965: relating to picketing or parading at the residence of a judge with the intent to interfere with, obstruct, or impede the administration of justice or influence any judge and providing a penalty.

Re: Assembly Bill 966: relating to privacy protections for judicial officers, granting rule-making authority, and providing a penalty.

Re: Assembly Bill 967: relating to withholding judicial security profiles from public access.

STATEMENT BY HON. MARIA S. LAZAR

Good morning, I am Judge Maria S. Lazar, Court of Appeals Judge for District 2 (that covers 12 counties on the eastern part of Wisconsin, not including Milwaukee). I felt that judicial safety and security was so important that I have driven here today to speak in support of the Judicial Security Package presently before the Legislature.

Sadly, I believe more and more that we are in an increasingly incivil and dangerous world. I have heard it said that the language of our public life has lost its generosity. In days past, if a litigant or member of the public had an issue or disagreement with a decision by a judge (on any level of our judiciary), they would take appropriate legal steps: file an appeal, file a motion or writ, or write a letter to the court or the media.

Now, individuals with grievances (real or imagined) feel empowered to threaten or even physically attack judges and judicial officers and their families. In 2022, a retired Wisconsin circuit court judge was killed in his home. In October, 2023, a Maryland family court judge was shot to death in the driveway of his home while his wife and son were in the house. This coincides with reports that threats and judicial attacks also frequently target the judges' home rather than the workplace.

In their book, Defusing the Risk to Judicial Officials: The Contemporary Threat Management Process, Frederick Calhoun and Stephen Weston reportedly explain that in the eyes of an attacker, judges and other judicial officials can represent or personify the justice system and the motive for an attack arises out of anger at that system or a desire for revenge.

While on the Circuit Court Bench in Waukesha County, I and my colleagues have been the subject of threats; one of which (that was eerily ambiguous) was mailed to me at my home, and I spent one Thanksgiving weekend with local law enforcement making safety drive-bys of my home. Luckily, to date, nothing ever came from that note and no threats materialized that weekend. As well, one of my colleagues on District 2 Court of Appeals received threats last year in the midst of a judicial campaign. I have been encouraged to alter the path I drive home each night, to watch which packages are delivered to my door (and with Amazon that's now even more of an issue), and to not mention my position when I travel. The list of threats is large, but not typically made public.

Judges (and judicial officials) put their heart and souls into their roles. I devote every day to standing up for the Constitution, the rule of law, and the rights of all citizens of the State of Wisconsin. We – I – don't ask for thanks or praise. It is my honor to serve this State. But, we do not deserve to have to worry about not only ourselves, but our families and staff. This Judicial Security Package recognizes the service the judiciary—the third branch of government—provides and the importance of protecting its members, family, and staff.

I am also authorized to state that other judges on District 2 Court of Appeals also support the Judicial Security Package.

Good Morning:

My name is Paul Curran and I serve as the Circuit Court Judge in Branch 2 in Juneau County.

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in this magnificent building to those of you chosen to work here every day. It is a great honor. I am here to speak in support of 2023 Assembly Bill 966, 965, and 967.

More specifically, I am here to tell you about the dangers judges face. There is no question that any justice, judge or judicial officer who has been in service to the State of Wisconsin for almost any length of time, has been threatened. Almost all the time, those threats are the empty words of a disappointed litigant. I am here to talk you about a man who made no threats, but assassinated my friend, the Honorable John Pier Roemer.

The Honorable John Pier Roemer was a man of commitment and service. He was committed to his faith and his family. He was a true student of the law and an outstanding jurist. The hallmark of his life was service. He served in our armed forces, retiring as lieutenant colonel in the army reserve. After he graduated law school he spent a relatively short time in private practice and then served the poor

as a member of the State Public Defender's Office. After years as a public defender he moved over to the other side of the courtroom and became an assistant district attorney. He served in that capacity for many years. In 2004, he was elected to be the Circuit Judge for Juneau County. At that time, there wasn't a Branch 2. He served the state and the law alone.

When Branch 2 was created in 2008, I was elected to the bench. We worked together until 2017 when he abruptly resigned. He resigned because his wife, Vivian, got a bad cancer diagnosis. He believed his service to the State of Wisconsin and the law was superseded by his responsibilities to his wife. She died a few months after his retirement.

At about 6:30 in the morning on June 3, 2022, a man came to his home. That man zip tied him to a chair, tortured him and assassinated him.

The man was not on anybody's radar as a threat. Judge Roemer had sentenced him years before. He was not posting threats on social media, or writing poison letters.

I tell you this not because I believe these bills would guarantee prevention of such a thing. I think they would make it harder. I do not know how the man knew

where Judge Roemer lived, but these bills would tend to make it harder for anyone to find out that information.

I also tell you the story of Judge Roemer to illustrate that there is a real and deadly risk that all judges face. Judges are not the only ones that face these risks. I would be supportive of bills which extended these protections to the executive and legislative branches of our government. However, I am not aware of any such bills that are pending.

In the years from 2008 to 2017, while Judge Roemer and I served together in the Juneau County Circuit Court, we became good friends. Often, after the Justice Center was closed, we would talk about anything that was on our minds. Legal issues, cultural issues (he was a big Brewers fan), and even the chancy subjects of politics and religion. When he was killed, his life of service ended. He served his clients as an attorney in private practice. He served the poor as an assistant public defender, he served the State of Wisconsin as a prosecutor and the State of Wisconsin as a circuit court judge. He served our country in the military. He served his community on a variety of boards and committees. He served his church in a variety of leadership roles.

I advocate for these bills because I think they will help protect other public servants continue to serve.

Thank you for your time,

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

CHAMBERS OF
PAMELA PEPPER
CHIEF JUDGE

FEDERAL COURTHOUSE
517 EAST WISCONSIN AVENUE
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53202
(414) 297-3335

January 23, 2024

To the Members of the Assembly Committee on
Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

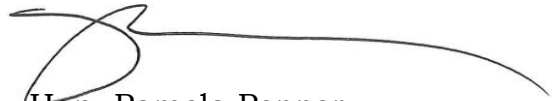
My name is Pamela Pepper. I am chief judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin. I sit in Milwaukee. As a federal judge sitting in Wisconsin, I write to urge you to support AB 965/SB926, AB966/SB927 and AB967/SB928.

The Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act was signed into law on December 23, 2022. That law—named after the slain son of my colleague, U.S. District Judge Esther Salas of the District of New Jersey—severely limits the availability of federal judges’ personally identifiable information in federal databases and restricts data aggregators from reselling such information. But as significant and critical as the Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act is, it does *not* afford the same protections to *state court* judges. Nor does it limit the availability of *any* judge’s personally identifiable information in *state and local* databases. Without legislation such as proposed AB 965, AB 966 and AB 967, individuals who seek to harm Wisconsin judges or their families, or improperly influence Wisconsin judges, can obtain personally identifiable information about those judges from state and local databases. As Wisconsinites learned in the summer of 2022 when former Juneau County Circuit Court Judge John Roemer was murdered at his home by someone he’d sentenced years earlier, public access to a judge’s personal identifying information can have tragic consequences for judges, whose decisions frequently disappoint or anger one party or the other, and for their loved ones. Less than three months ago, Judge Andrew Wilkinson of the Washington County Circuit Court in Maryland was shot and killed in the driveway of his home by a litigant against whom he’d ruled. A litigant with a judge’s personal information can send threatening correspondence or other items to a judge’s home. In December 1989 during the holiday season, a litigant sent a mail bomb to the home of Judge Robert Vance of the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. When Judge Vance opened that package, it killed him and seriously injured his wife. That bomb was one of what turned out to be four mail bombs sent by former litigant Walter Leroy Moody; of those four bombs, one killed Judge Vance and another was intercepted at the

federal courthouse in Atlanta. People wishing ill will toward a judge can use personal identifying information to cause financial consequences that can be dire; they can put liens on a judge's home, encumbering real estate and causing tax consequences. There are too many stories like these. Almost every judge—local, state or federal—who has been on the bench for any length of time has stories of threats or near tragedies, and most judges know at least one colleague who has faced the kinds of tragedies that the families of Judge Vance, Judge Salas, Judge Roemer, Judge Wilkinson and others have endured.

A fair and impartial judicial branch is a cornerstone of our American democratic system of government. For the judicial system to be fair and impartial, judges must decide cases based on the facts before them and the law that binds them, not based on fear for their lives and safety or the lives and safety of their loved ones. The package of judicial security bills made up of AB 965, AB 966 and AB 967 resembles bills passed in other states (including Judge Salas's home state of New Jersey) and bills being considered in other state legislatures. Passage of judicial security legislation is critical to reduce the risks to the safety of Wisconsin judges and to support the fair and impartial administration of justice for the people of Wisconsin. I urge you to support this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pamela Pepper', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon. Pamela Pepper
Chief United States District Judge

Dunn County Circuit Courts
Judge James M. Peterson – Branch I
Judge Christina M. Mayer – Branch II
Judge Luke M. Wagner – Branch III

615 Stokke Parkway, Suite 1300

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Joseph Detrick, Jud. Asst./Paralegal
Elizabeth Comer, Jud. Asst./Paralegal
Olivia Solberg, Court Reporter, Br. II

Jacob Fabish, Jud. Asst./Paralegal
Sharesa Campshure, Court Reporter, Br. I
Andrea Bluedorn, Court Reporter, Br. III

January 23, 2024

The Assembly Committee on
Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Wisconsin State Capitol
2 East Main St.
Madison, WI 53703

RE: Judicial Security Bills AB 965/SB926, AB 967/SB928,
and AB 966/SB 927

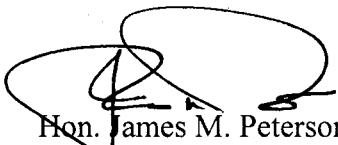
To Whom It May Concern:

We have just received copies of the Judicial Security Package Summary along with copies of the following bills:

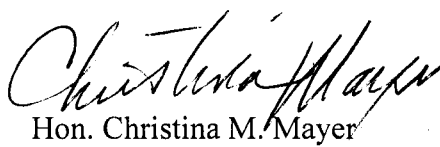
- AB 965/SB 926: Picketing and Parading
- AB 967/SB 928: Public Record Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles
- AB 966/SB 927: Judicial Officer Privacy

We are writing to support the passing of these bills. In the past few years, the Judiciary has come under greater threat of harm. With the passing of these bills, it will help our Judiciary continue to do our jobs with more security, safety, and peace of mind. Thank you for your time.

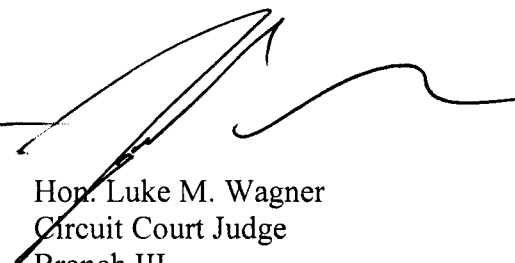
Respectfully,



Hon. James M. Peterson
Circuit Court Judge
Branch I
Dunn County, Wisconsin



Hon. Christina M. Mayer
Circuit Court Judge
Branch II
Dunn County, Wisconsin



Hon. Luke M. Wagner
Circuit Court Judge
Branch III
Dunn County, Wisconsin



CIRCUIT COURT FOR SAUK COUNTY

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PATRICIA A. BARRETT
Circuit Court, Branch 3

HEIDI DAVIS
Court Reporter
KRYSTLE E. NAAB
Judicial Assistant

January 23, 2024

To: The Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

I am writing to express my support for AB 965/SB 926 (Picketing and Parading); AB 966/SB 927 (Judicial Officer Privacy); and AB 967/SB 928 (Public Records Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles).

I am, as are many of my colleagues, public servants with prior public service as prosecutors and/or public defenders. In smaller rural communities, where judges carry caseloads that cover all practice areas, the list of prior disenchanted participants or their families in the court system grow with every year of public service. Verbal threats are more prevalent than one might imagine but it is the silent person with planning and public research skills that presents an unknown threat like the one that took Judge Jack Roemer's life.

I urge your support of these bills as a supplemental step to the personal security measures judges already employ thru their courthouse, but also privately at their homes or as they travel to their homes.

Respectfully,

Patricia A. Barrett
Circuit Court, Branch 3

FOND DU LAC COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

160 S MACY STREET
FOND DU LAC, WISCONSIN 54935

January 23, 2024

State of Wisconsin Assembly
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Sent via email: Cameil.Bowler@legis.wisconsin.gov

RE: Pending legislation

To the members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

The Fond du Lac County Judges are writing to support the pending legislation as it relates to judicial security. We are in support of the following pending bills: AB 965/SB 926 (Picketing and Parading), AB 967/SB 928 (Public Record Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles), and AB 966/SB 927 (Judicial Officer Privacy).

We believe that this proposed legislation is appropriate to address judicial safety concerns. As the members of our legislature know, the judiciary has been subject to physical attacks both at home and in the courtroom. Judicial independence is a cornerstone of our constitutional democracy. The judiciary should not be subjected to personal attacks or intimidation. Therefore, judicial safety is a method of enforcing our nation's bedrock principles of independence and protection of the rule of law.

We appreciate your time and your attention to these bills.

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by Hon. Anthony Nehls, Branch 1

Electronically signed by Hon. Laura Lavey, Branch 2

Electronically signed by Hon. Andrew Christenson, Branch 3

Electronically signed by Hon. Tricia Walker, Branch 4

Electronically signed by Hon. Douglas Edelstein, Branch 5

Chambers of
Circuit Judge ~ Washburn County

ANGELINE E. WINTON
Circuit Judge

Washburn County Courthouse
P.O. Box 339
Shell Lake, WI 54871
(715) 468-4680
FAX (715) 468-4678

CATHLEEN D. COLBERT
Court Reporters

SHANNON ANDERSON
Clerk of Court/Register in Probate
(715)468-4677

JEANNE HARZ
Judicial Assistant
(715)468-4680

January 23, 2024

Ms. Cameil Bowler
Policy Advisor and Committee Clerk at the Wisconsin State Assembly

Re: Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Dear Ms. Bowler:

Please accept this letter in robust support of the following bills scheduled to be addressed at a public hearing regarding the Judicial Security Legislation Package on January 24, 2024 at 10:01 a.m.:

AB 965/ SB 926 – Picketing and Parading
AB967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judiciary Security Profiles
AB 966/ SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy

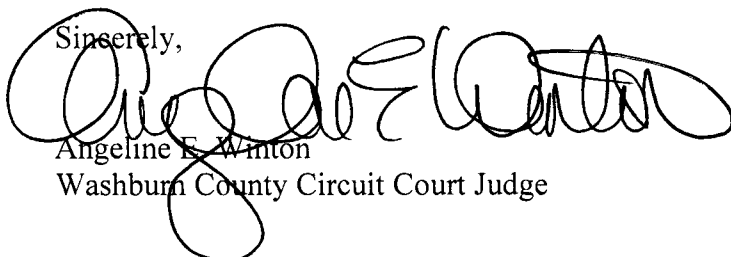
In recent years, incidents and threats of violence toward the judiciary and other court officers have become an increasing concern.

Personally, while I love my job and always strive to put aside my personal security concerns, one cannot help being troubled when one switches on the television in the morning and hears about another serious instance of violence involving judges and court staff.

The proposed legislation provides enhanced protections that are critically needed, especially for those of us living in rural communities. With utmost respect, I urge you to pass this legislation into law.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Angeline E. Winton
Washburn County Circuit Court Judge

KRISTINE A. SNOW, CIRCUIT JUDGE
DODGE COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT, BRANCH IV
Dodge County Justice Facility
210 West Center Street
Juneau, Wisconsin 53039-1091
920) 386-4050 FAX (920) 386-3587

Adrienne Redelings
(920) 386-4049
Court Reporter

Dawn Luck
(920) 386-4050
Judicial Assistant

January 23, 2024

RE: Judicial Security Bills

To Whom it may Concern:

Pending before the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety is a trio of bills addressing judicial officer safety: AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading; AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles; and AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy. Rep. Schraa is a member of that committee which will be soon holding hearings on these bills. I bring this to all of your attention as a member of the judiciary who is directly affected by the issues addressed in these three bills. Please note my support and ensure that these bills are enacted as laws in our state without delay.

The security of our judiciary (and lack thereof) became front-line news in 2022 with the murder of Reserve Judge John Roemer. The perpetrator was a litigant in his courtroom many years prior, and underscores not only the importance of the decisions we judges make every day, but the impact that extends for years on the people that appear in our courtrooms.

Judges make decisions on a daily basis affecting people's most significant interests: their liberty, their families, and their property. Most of these people are not dangerous. However, we are face to face with people in our courtroom that are impacted negatively by our decisions. We often see their anger. In the courtroom judges have protections; outside the courtroom we judges and our families have very few.

Wisconsin has a long held tradition of open records and access to information. Yet this tradition must yield to the very justifiable safety concerns of our current and former judges and their families. We will never scrub all information from the internet. Much of the

Page 2
Judicial Security Bills
January 23, 2024

information on the internet is gleaned from our public records. Under these circumstances, the interests of the public must take a back seat to judiciary security.

Let me in particular address AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles. I for one, have not filled out a security profile for our sheriff and local law enforcement agency. The security profile includes information including the location and layout of our house, identity family members that live in my home, whether we have pets, whether we have a security system, and other extremely important, private information. While that information would be important for law enforcement if an emergency occurs in my home, I am more concerned about the information being released to the wrong person that may intend harm to me and my family. The public does not have any legitimate interest in this information.

Please take the time to review these three Judicial Security bills when they cross your desk and you hear discussion. I encourage you to pass these three bills without delay.

Very truly yours,

/s/Kristine Snow

Kristine A. Snow
Circuit Court Judge
Branch IV



Chambers of

Judge EUGENE A. GASIORKIEWICZ

Presiding Judge Racine County Circuit Court Branch II
730 Wisconsin Ave
Racine, Wisconsin 53403
Eugene.Gasiorkiewicz@wicourts.gov

Deputy Clerk
Jennifer Bell
(262) 636-3131

Official Court Reporter
Hannah Wronkowski
(262) 636-3135

January 23, 2024

Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Via email to: Cameil.Bowler@legis.wisconsin.gov

I am a Circuit Court Judge in Racine County and would like this letter to serve as my full support and endorse and encourage the passage of AB 965/SB 926; AB967/SB 928 and AB966/SB 927.

The Racine Judiciary, along with other courts throughout the country, have been the subject of ridicule, insult, and physical assault for rulings they courageously have made. Harassment in the form of UCC liens filed against their property to outright threats requiring law enforcement intervention have existed and unfortunately been on the rise. These events have created real concern for the safety of ourselves and our families.

The above-referenced litigation would go a long way to providing security and protection for members of the judiciary, their property, and their families. Please pass these important bills.

I am authorized to advise the following members of the Racine County Judiciary agree with the content of this letter:

Hon. Timothy Boyle
Hon. David Paulson
Hon. Robert Repischak
Hon. Wynne Laufenberg
Hon. Kristin Cafferty
Hon. Jon Fredrickson

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eugene A. Gasiorkiewicz", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Honorable Eugene A. Gasiorkiewicz

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

Samantha Bastil
Branch 1

Natasha Torry
Branch 2

Angela Sutkiewicz
Presiding Judge, Branch 3

Rebecca Persick
Branch 4

George Limbeck
Branch 5

Sheboygan County Circuit Court
615 N Sixth Street
Sheboygan WI 53081

January 23, 2024

State of Wisconsin Assembly
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Sent Via Email: Cameil.Bowler@legis.wisconsin.gov

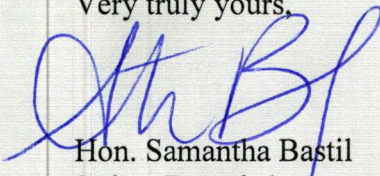
To the Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

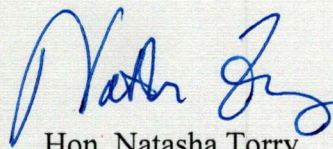
The Sheboygan County Circuit Court Judges write in support of the pending legislation related to judicial security. Specifically, we write in support of the following pending bills: AB 965/SB 926 (Picketing and Parading), AB 967/SB 928 (Public Record Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles), and AB 966/SB 927 (Judicial Officer Privacy).

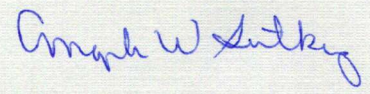
As you are aware, the judiciary has been subjected to physical attacks both at home and in the courtroom. We believe that the proposed legislation are necessary and appropriate to address judicial safety concerns both in our homes and in our place of work. Physical attacks on the judiciary are a threat to a cornerstone of our constitutional democracy, an independent judiciary.

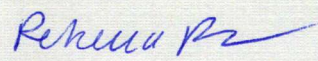
These pieces of legislation are necessary to protect both judicial independence and the rule of law. We hope you will support the passage of each bill.

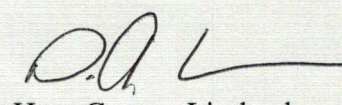
Very truly yours,


Hon. Samantha Bastil
Judge, Branch 1


Hon. Natasha Torry
Judge, Branch 2


Hon. Angela Sutkiewicz
Presiding Judge, Branch 3


Hon. Rebecca Persick
Judge, Branch 4


Hon. George Limbeck
Judge, Branch 5

Circuit Court Chambers
of the
Hon. William M. Bratcher

Lisa Waldhart
Court Reporter
Kimberly Bredlau
Register in Probate

Clark County Branch 2
517 Court St.
Neillsville, Wisconsin 54456
Telephone
715-743-5172

Antonette Osburn
Judicial Assistant
Anna Benzschawel
Juvenile Clerk

January 23, 2024

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
P.O. Box 8952
Madison WI 53708
VIA EMAIL ONLY

Re: Judicial Security Legislation Package – Support for Assembly Bills 965, 966, and 967

Greetings Representatives:

I am the duly elected Clark County Circuit Court Branch II Judge. As you may know, this is one of the new branches that was added in 2023, authorized by 2019 Wisconsin Act 184. That means I am a “baby” Judge, having been in office only a little under six months now.

Intellectually, I understood the security concerns that come with being a judge before I was sworn in. However, now that I am living it, and I have actually heard cases involving violent crime, severe mental illness, and so on, I can actually put a face to people who may want to harm me, or worse – hurt my family, merely because I was the one that enforced and carried out the law. It is a more concrete, rather than abstract concern for me now.

Due to the efforts of my local Sheriff's department, I feel very safe once I am in the courthouse for the day. So, at least during that time, I don't worry too much about myself. However, what I really worry about is my family. They do not have nothing to do with the decisions I make in court, yet they could be targeted by someone wishing to do me harm.

That is why it is why I write in enthusiastic support of the Judicial Security Legislation package being discussed in your meeting on 01/24/2024, specifically Assembly Bills 965, 966, and 967.

These bills will allow me to provide local law enforcement with my family's security profile without fear that it could be discoverable with an open records request, and keep my family's information (such as residence location) off of other publically available lists, which are both issues of vital importance.

In short, please help us Judges keep our families safe by passing these bills!

Thank you for your time and for considering the needs of Judges and their families – it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Hon. William M. Bratcher

Angela W Sutkiewicz
CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

Circuit Court Branch 3
615 N Sixth Street
Sheboygan WI 53081
(920) 459-0532

January 23, 2024

Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Sent via email: Cameil.Bowler@legis.wisconsin.gov

Dear Committee Members:

Please accept this letter as support for the judicial security package which includes AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading, AB 967/SB 928- Public Record Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles, and AB 966/SB 927- Judicial Officer Privacy.

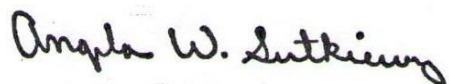
Providing privacy protections for judicial officers is imperative to ensure that judicial officers and their families feel secure in their own homes. Establishing methods that create exemptions from public disclosure, such as not requiring judicial officers to provide home addresses on nomination papers, will allow for performing constitutionally mandated responsibilities without the concern of being confronted at home.

There have been several instances of unhappy litigants appearing at my personal residence. On one occasion, a defendant went to my home when both my husband and I were at work, scaring my teenage children by pacing back and forth in front of my home, and yelling complaints in an aggressive manner. He refused to leave until law enforcement arrived. Another time, a litigant came to my address, and began taking photographs of my home in what I perceived as an attempt to intimidate me.

Incidents like these concerned my family, leaving us feeling vulnerable. Currently, it is not difficult to gain access to the personal information of judicial officials such as home addresses. I strongly support the proposed legislation as the personal information of judicial officials would be much less available to the public.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed legislation.

Very truly yours,



Angela W Sutkiewicz
Presiding Judge, Sheboygan County Circuit Court
Sheboygan Area Veterans Treatment Court Judge

From: [Paul Malloy](#)
To: [Bowler, Cameil](#)
Cc: [Sen.Stroebe](#); [Sen.Knodl](#); [Rep.Andraca](#); [Brooks, Rob](#); ["Rep."](#); [Michael Bohren](#); [Sandy Williams](#); [Steven Cain](#); [Barry Boline](#)
Subject: Re Court security enhancement bill
Date: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 11:33:12 AM

Dear Ms. Bowler,

I am writing to urge the committee to act favorably on the judicial security bills under consideration at its January 24th, 2024 meeting. My colleagues, Judge Sandy Williams and Judge Steven Cain, as well as Ozaukee County Circuit Court Commissioner Barry Boline, join me in supporting these bills. I believe the evidence clearly establishes the vast majority of attacks, harassing behavior, and threats directed at judges involve conduct away from their assigned courthouse. I also believe that this type of threatening behavior is increasing. On a personal note, both Judge Williams and I were subject to threats from a family member in an homicide by operation of motor vehicle while intoxicated case. Judge Williams was the Ozaukee County District Attorney at the time, I the assigned judge. Several years later a criminal defendant protest with signs in front of my home while I conducted his jury trial. Worse still, a divorce litigant once attempted to enlist the aid of a jail inmate to assist in the to hire of a person to "take care" of her ex-husband and me. She ultimately went to prison for her effort. Circuit Court Commissioner was the subject of a threat from a divorce litigant that wanted him and the litigant's ex-wife beaten and thrown in the trunk of car. All of these incident occurred away from the Justice Center.

I think the proposed bill is a step in the right direction toward ensuring a judge's safety in his or her home. Protest in front of the judge's home may still occur as long as its scope remains outside that prohibited in the bill. Security profiles should also be exempted from release under the State's open records law. That form contains a drawing of the interior or the judge's home, the type of vehicles associated with the residence, whether firearms are in the house, medications that might be in the home, and more. Exempting disclosure of this information from Wisconsin's Open Records law has very little impact on the spirit of the law while adding an extra layer of safety to the judiciary. At the same time, it allows law enforcement access to critical information, should the need arise.

I also stand in support of bill requiring a person to remove personal information from internet sites. We have had ongoing issues with information being posted on the internet that is inaccurate, inappropriate, and/or threatening. Most individuals are eventually convicted for this conduct, but this takes valuable time, during which judges and commissioners remain an easy target. These bills would deter such behavior by limiting access to such personal information. The proposed process will ensure more efficient criminal prosecution.

I am unable to be present for tomorrow's meeting. If you have any questions or need any information please feel free to contact me.

Judge Paul V. Malloy



CARRIE A. SCHNEIDER
CIRCUIT COURT BRANCH 5

Phone 920.832.1550
Fax 920.832.5115

Justice Center – 320 S. Walnut St., Appleton, WI 54911

KRISTINE GALARNO
COURT REPORTER

JESSICA MEITNER
JUDICIAL ASSISTANT

January 23, 2024

Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

RE: Judicial Security Package
AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading
AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles
AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy

Dear Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

In advance of the hearing tomorrow on the above bills, we collectively are writing with our full support. We request your support of these important pieces of legislation. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of cases statewide and nationwide involving the need for additional judicial security measures. These incidents have been precipitated upon security concerns both at the workplace and homes of judges in our State. The tragedy in 2022 where a fellow colleague was murdered at his home by a litigant only highlights the risk and danger that judges can face in handling their required work.

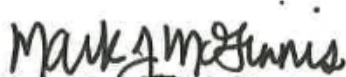
Outagamie County has had its own incidents requiring heightened judicial security concerns in the last year. These have included a litigant coming to the residence of a judge and multiple parties who created security concerns at the courthouse. The current legislation provides an initial step in the process of addressing judicial security concerns. All three pieces of pending legislation have a different and important role in addressing some of these concerns. Judicial security in our own homes, prohibiting releases of information and working with law enforcement to insure safety in our homes is critical in judicial safety and security. Each of these pending bills help to address these areas of concern.

We thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We encourage your support of these important pieces of legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us with further questions.

Sincerely,



Hon. Carrie A. Schneider
Circuit Court, Br. 5
Presiding Judge
(920) 832-1550



Hon. Mark G. McGinnis
Circuit Court, Br. 1
(920) 832-5152



Hon. Emily Lonergan
Circuit Court, Br. 2
(920) 832-5153



Hon. Mitchell J. Metropulos
Circuit Court, Br. 3
(920) 832-5245



Hon. Yadira Rein
Circuit Court, Br. 4
(920) 832-5602



Hon. Vincent Biskupic
Circuit Court, Br. 6
(920) 832-6038



Hon. Mark G. Schroeder
Circuit Court, Br. 7
(920) 832-4727



Marc A. Hammer
Circuit Judge

Ann Schmidt
Judicial Assistant
(920) 448-4118

CIRCUIT COURT BRANCH V
Brown County Courthouse
100 South Jefferson Street
P.O. Box 23600
Green Bay, WI 54305-3600

Jennifer Mariucci
Court Coordinator
(920) 448-4168

Valeria Nieto
Court Reporter
(920) 448-4119

January 23, 2024

To the Wisconsin State Legislature:

I am the Circuit Court Judge elected to preside over Branch V of Brown County Circuit Court.

I am in SUPPORT of the proposed Judicial Security Package legislation.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc A. Hammer", with a long, sweeping underline.

Marc A. Hammer
Brown County Circuit Judge
Branch V

MAH/as

CHAMBERS OF CIRCUIT COURT
HONORABLE JAMES M. ISAACSON
HONORABLE STEVEN H. GIBBS
HONORABLE BENJAMIN J. LANE
Chippewa County

711 North Bridge Street
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729-1876

January 23, 2024

Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety Members:

Dear Representatives:

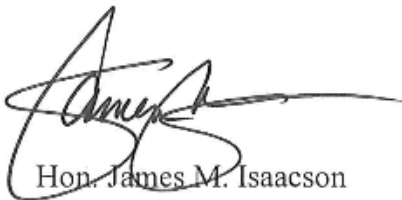
We are writing to urge your support of the following:

AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading
AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles
AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy

Since we became judges, each of us has experienced threats to our lives, or have been impacted by threats to attorneys or litigants in our courtrooms. It is too late to react to threats once they have occurred. Preemptively responding to threats and planning for greater security ensures safer court environments for all citizens.

We are requesting your support for the referenced bills. Each bill will provide greater security to our families and our homes. Retired Vernon County Judge, Hon. John Roemer, was killed in his home in 2022. Having these bills in place would keep public records for our residences and our families from being available to the general public. Disturbed individuals are bold, will act, and we need to be prepared. These bills provide an opportunity to keep personal information regarding our residences and families from falling into the wrong hands.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.



Hon. James M. Isaacson

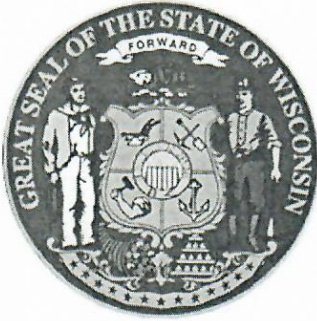


Hon. Steven H. Gibbs



Hon. Benjamin J. Lane

CC: State Senator Jesse James, State Representative Rob Summerfield,
State Representative Karen Hurd



WAUKESHA COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

515 W. Moreland Boulevard
PO Box 1627
Waukesha, WI 53187-1627

To legislators considering Assembly Bills 965, 966 and 967 and Senate Bills, 926, 927 and 928:

We the undersigned elected Waukesha County Circuit Court Judges and appointed Circuit Court Commissioners endorse and support the enactment into law of Assembly Bills 965, 966 and 967 and the corresponding Senate Bills, 926, 927 and 928 which, if enacted, will do much to enhance the safety and security of Wisconsin judicial officers and their families.

Many of us have been subject to threats to ourselves and family members both at the courthouse and our residences. The proposals before you make locating our homes more difficult, and enhances the ability of law enforcement to offer protection to judicial officers outside of the courthouse. Recent events in Las Vegas and New Jersey establish that the danger to judicial officers is very real. The citizens of this state, however, need only be reminded of the senseless and horrific murder of Juneau County Circuit Court Judge John Roemer in June of 2022 to understand the peril and vulnerability to each judicial officer in this state. We respectfully ask you to support this important legislation.

Dated January 23, 2024 at Waukesha, Wisconsin.

Hon. Ralph M. Roman

Michael O. Shea



STATE OF WISCONSIN
SUPREME COURT
P. O. BOX 1688
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53701

CHAMBERS OF
ANNETTE KINGSLAND ZIEGLER,
CHIEF JUSTICE

STATE CAPITOL, 16 EAST
(608) 266-1881

January 24, 2024

The Honorable John Spiros, Chair
Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Room 212 North, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

RE: Assembly Bill 965, relating to picketing or parading at the residence of a judge
Assembly Bill 966, privacy protections for judicial officers
Assembly Bill 967, relating to withholding judicial security profiles from public
access

Dear Representative Spiros and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of **Assembly Bills 965, 966, and 967**. I would also like to thank Representatives Tusler, Ortiz-Velez, and Stubbs, Senators Wanggaard and Taylor, and their staff members for their work on these proposals.

As you know, like the federal system, in recent years, the Wisconsin Court System has attracted national media attention. Unfortunately, we also experienced a tragedy in 2022, when retired Judge John P. Roemer was murdered in his home in what the Wisconsin Department of Justice characterized as a “targeted act.” He was shot and killed by a man whom he had sentenced to prison years earlier. In other words, Judge Roemer appears to have been killed for doing his job as a judge.

In the last 12 months alone, the Supreme Court Marshal’s Office documented 142 threats against judges and justices in the Wisconsin Court System, 44 of which were direct threats of physical harm or death. Judges should not be threatened with acts of violence from people or groups who want to intimidate or harm us, push a cause, subvert the rule of law, or control the outcome of a case. That is a basic tenet of Judicial Independence. No one should face threats or violence for carrying out their role in the legal system—a system intended to serve as a forum for resolving disputes peacefully, according to the law.

These concerns are not unique to Wisconsin. Judges are frequently becoming the target of threats and violence, and threats to judges are on the rise. Illinois federal Judge Joan Lefkow’s husband and mother were shot and killed by an aggrieved litigant. In July 2020, the son of Federal Judge Esther Salas was killed, and her husband grievously injured by an attorney at the front door of the family’s New Jersey home. In 2022, a man was charged in an alleged attempt to kill Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh because of a case before the United States Supreme Court. The recent horrific

killing of a Maryland judge as he stood in his own driveway, at his home, continues to remind us of the need to be always vigilant and continue to enhance judicial safety.

The court's Planning and Policy Advisory Committee (PPAC) has identified court safety and security as priorities since at least 2016. Those in the court system who specialize in this area, including Waukesha County Circuit Court Judge Michael Bohren, PPAC's Court Security Subcommittee, and the Legislative Committee of the Judicial Conference, have continuously worked on security issues.

The Wisconsin Constitution vests the state's judicial power in its court system. Wisconsinites who answer the call to serve as judicial officers in our court system must have the ability to fairly administer justice and safely do their jobs. We need to ensure their security so that they, in turn, can ensure our legal system's success.

Security is a priority not only for the judges who already serve, but also for those who have served and those who will become judges in the future. Judicial officers have demanding jobs. They are aware of the nature of the job when they take their judicial oaths. They see people on their best and worst days. And some days, the robe is particularly heavy, as judges make difficult rulings that can affect freedoms, impose monetary judgments, or permanently change the course of peoples' lives. We need to give judges the tools to support the important role they have been assigned, in every case that comes before them.

Following the murder of Judge Roemer, I prioritized the security and safety of all of the judicial officers in the Wisconsin court system. My efforts included identifying tools used in other jurisdictions to develop a package of bills on judicial security to increase the security of all Wisconsin judges. According to the 2023 CCJ/COSCA Personal Safety and Security Survey, the National Center for State Courts reports that 30 states "have at least one or more statutes in place related to the protection of personally identifiable information for judges."¹ Using all of these resources, I requested that the Legislative Committee, with the assistance of members of the judiciary, work to develop Assembly Bills 965, 966, and 967.

These bills address three discrete areas of judicial safety: (1) creating a picketing/protesting prohibition applicable to judicial residences; (2) increasing privacy protections for judicial officers by exempting personal information from release pursuant to public records requests and creating a process for judicial officers who so choose, to limit the public availability of their personal information; and (3) exempting from disclosure under the Public Records Law judicial security profiles, which judges can complete and submit to law enforcement to assist in the development of an emergency response plan.

AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading

¹ Conference of Chief Justices, Conference of State Court Administrators, and National Center for State Courts, *2023 CCJ/COSCA Personal Safety and Security Survey* (Aug. 28, 2023).

This bill recognizes the public policy and legal boundary between demonstrators' constitutional rights to free speech and assembly and judges' rights to feel safe and secure in their homes and in the carrying out of their constitutional duties. The bill creates a Class A misdemeanor to picket, parade, or demonstrate at or near any residence occupied by a judge with the intent to interfere with, obstruct, or impede the administration of justice or with the intent to influence any judge in the discharge of his or her duty.

The bill is based on 18 U.S.C. § 1507 – Picketing or Parading; however, it removes the prohibition found in 18 U.S.C. § 1507 against picketing, parading or demonstrating at, in, or near a building housing a court thus limiting the bill to prohibit individuals from picketing, parading or demonstrating in or near the residence or residences of a judge.

AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy

This bill aims to recognize that public officials such as judges are at risk of harm as a result of carrying out their duties. From a public policy perspective, the goal is to protect these at-risk public servants against the disclosure or publishing of their personal information. The bill creates protections similar to those that exist in other states and at the federal level for federal judges. The bill was originally based on the Illinois Judicial Privacy Act, 705 ILCS 90/; California's comparable Inspection of Public Records Law, California Government Code 6254.21; and the Federal Daniel A. Claitor Judicial Security and Privacy Act of 2022.

AB 966 exempts from public records requests a judicial officer's personal information, as defined by the bill. It also prohibits data brokers from knowingly selling, licensing, trading, purchasing, or otherwise making available for consideration the personal information of a judicial officer or a judicial officer's immediate family.

The bill creates a process for judicial officers to submit a certification of residence to the Wisconsin Elections Commission prior to the circulation of nomination papers. Judicial officers who have filed such a certification are not required to indicate his or her residential address on the nomination papers or on the declaration of candidacy.

The bill also creates a process for judicial officers who so choose, to limit the public availability of their personal information. A judicial officer may make a written request to a government agency that the government agency refrain from publicly posting or displaying publicly available content that includes the judicial officer's personal information. A government agency that receives such a request must remove the information within 5 business days.

Similarly, the bill also prohibits persons, businesses, or associations from publicly posting or displaying on the internet publicly available content that includes the personal information of the judicial officer or the judicial officer's immediate family if the judicial officer has made a written request to the person, business, or association that it refrain from disclosing or acquiring the personal information. If a request is made, the information must be removed within 72 hours.

January 24, 2024

Page 4

A judicial officer whose personal information is made public in violation of the bill may bring an action seeking injunctive or declaratory relief.

The bill contains a good faith exception for employees of government agencies that published personal information in good faith on the website of a government agency in the ordinary course of carrying out public functions.

A person commits a Class G felony if the person knowingly publicly posts or displays on the internet personal information of a judicial officer or a judicial officer's immediate family, the person intends the public posting or display to create or increase a threat to the health and safety of the judicial officer, and bodily injury or death of the judicial officer or a family member of the judicial officer is a natural and probable consequence.

The bill has a delayed effective date of six months from enactment.

AB 967/SB 928 – Public Records Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles

This bill explicitly exempts from disclosure under the public records law judicial security profiles, which judges can complete and submit to law enforcement to assist in the development of an emergency response plan. These documents contain personal details of a judge and family members, and the information is very detailed to enable an effective emergency response. There is some hesitancy to complete such profiles, and an exemption from disclosure under the public records law could reduce hesitancy and provide law enforcement with an important tool in protecting judges.

The bill creates consistency and an ability for local authorities to easily recognize the forms subject to this exemption by requiring such profiles to be on a form approved by the Director of State Courts.

Thank you for considering this information. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Annette Kingsland Ziegler
Chief Justice, Wisconsin Supreme Court

cc: Members of Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

**JUDGE JULIE GENOVESE
DANE COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT BRANCH 13
215 SOUTH HAMILTON STREET, ROOM 8103
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53703-3289**

**Carolynne Sweeney, Court Reporter
Kasee Thies, Clerk
Abby Martinelli, Judicial Assistant**

**Telephone: (608) 266-4186
Facsimile: (608) 266-4080**

January 23, 2024

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

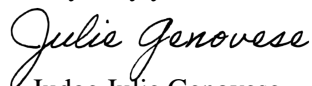
To Whom It May Concern:

I have been a judge for almost 15 years and have handled many high-profile, emotionally charged cases over the years. It is not easy to tell people they are going to prison or might lose their rights to their children. I understand that part of the challenge of this job is making unpopular decisions and that, as a public figure, I relinquish some of my privacy rights. However there are certain laws that can enhance judges' safety, and the proposed legislation strikes the right balance. Therefore, I urge you to adopt:

AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading
AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles
AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy

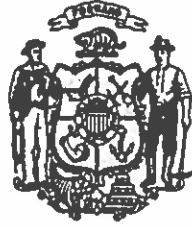
Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Judge Julie Genovese
Deputy Chief Judge, District V

TIMOTHY A. HINKFUSS
Circuit Judge



CIRCUIT COURT BRANCH VII

BROWN COUNTY COURTHOUSE
100 S. JEFFERSON STREET
P.O. BOX 23600
GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN 54305-3600

ALISON WINIECKI

Judicial Assistant
920/448-4121

KARA DUPONT

Court Coordinator
920/448-4173

PARKER PUES

Court Reporter
920/448-4122

January 23, 2024

To the Wisconsin State Legislature:

I am the Circuit Court Judge elected to preside over Branch VII of Brown County Circuit Court.

I am in SUPPORT of the proposed Judicial Security Package legislation.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy A. Hinkfuss".

Timothy A. Hinkfuss
Brown County Circuit Court Judge
Branch VII

Honorable Carey J. Reed

Rhonda Neumann, Register in Probate/Juvenile Clerk
Gina Anderson, Court Reporter | Alisa Gaffney, Judicial Assistant

206 Court Street, Chilton, WI 53014
Office: (920) 849-1465 | Toll Free: (833) 620-2730
Fax: (920) 849-1406 | www.calumetcounty.org

January 23, 2024

Dear legislative committee:

I write to support the following bills:

➤ AB 965 Picketing and Parading

If there is dissatisfaction with a particular judge, that issue should be taken up at the ballot box. The administration of justice requires that it be done without fear of retribution from disgruntled litigants. Judges are to apply the law to the facts of a given case. There is no room for fear in that equation.

➤ AB 966 – Judicial Officer Privacy

As with each of these bills, I would have thought that personal information of judges would be protected for obvious reasons. I find it a bit unsettling that the bill allows 72 hours, after a request, to remove a judge's personal information. That said, this is better than no protection.

➤ AB 967/SB 928 Public Records Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles

I am shocked that these records are not already protected. The security profile gives would be assailants a map of a judge's home, as well as specific information on the judge and his family members. The profile provides all the information one would need to carry out an attack on a judge in their home. I never would have filled a profile out, had I known it was available to would-be attackers. It is meant to aid police in the event of an attack, not to provide assistance to the attacker.

These are common sense bills that are necessary to protect the judiciary and their families. I urge the committee to expedite them.

Very truly yours



Carey J, Reed, Circuit Court Judge Branch II



Barron County Circuit Court



James C. Babler

Branch 1

Barron County Justice Center
1420 State Hwy 25 North
Barron, WI 54812-3006

TEL: (715) 537-6260
FAX: (715) 537-6269

Branch 2

Maureen D. Boyle

Branch 3

Court Reporters

Laura Fornell, Br. 1, Alison Ostenson, Br. 2, Jessica Ebner, Br. 3

Judicial Assistants

Bobbette Reinke, Br. 1, Danielle Neva, Br. 2, Debbie Nichols, Br. 3

Register in Probate

Deanne Larson

Justice Programs Coordinator

Shanda Harrington

January 23, 2024

Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
State Capital
Madison, WI 53701

RE: JUDICIAL SECURITY PACKAGE BILLS

Dear Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee:

Judge Boyle and I strongly support the passage of AB 965/SB 926, AB 967/SB 928, and AB 966/SB 927 which relate to the safety of Judges in Wisconsin. Judges are increasingly the focus of the anger of litigants and other individuals and these bills assist in protecting the privacy and safety of Judges throughout the State. These bills not only protect the safety and privacy of the Judges but also for their families. We urge you to adopt these three bills.

Very truly yours,


JAMES C BABLER
Circuit Judge

Maureen D. Boyle

MAUREEN D BOYLE
Circuit Judge

MANITOWOC COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT



MANITOWOC COUNTY COURTHOUSE
1010 SOUTH 8TH STREET
MANITOWOC, WISCONSIN 54220

BRANCH 1, ROOM 233
Judge Mark Rohrer

BRANCH 2, ROOM 218
Judge Jerilyn Dietz

BRANCH 3, ROOM 212
Judge Robert Dewane

BRANCH 4, ROOM B-20
Judge Anthony Lambrecht

January 23, 2024

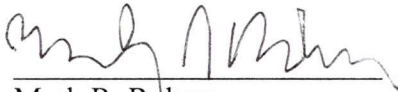
To the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

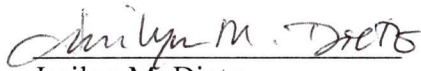
As the committee is certainly aware, judges around the nation have recently faced increased violent, even fatal, attacks. Many courthouses have already undertaken increased security measures, but there remain substantial threats to our personal safety and that of our families at our private homes, as well. We have no way to know which of the threats we all receive are serious threats, or which person who feels aggrieved by a ruling we made will decide to respond with violence. These are unfortunate realities of today's world, and we appreciate every effort to bolster our ability to protect ourselves and our families.

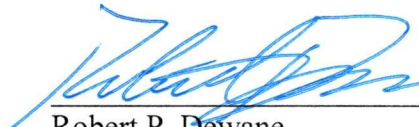
We emphatically support this package of proposed legislation as vital efforts to ensure our safety outside our workplaces. We take our responsibilities very seriously, but have to think long and hard about whether the danger we face, and the danger our families face as a result of our careers are worth it. This is a call no person should have to make. We unanimously urge you to pass AB 965/SB 926, AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles, and AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy.


Thank you for your service to our state and your attention to this very serious matter.

Sincerely yours,
Manitowoc County Circuit Court Judges


Mark R. Rohrer
Circuit Court Branch I


Jerilyn M. Dietz
Circuit Court Branch II
Presiding Judge


Robert P. Dewane
Circuit Court Branch III
Deputy Chief Judge


Anthony A. Lambrecht
Circuit Court Branch IV

Monroe County Circuit Court

Todd Ziegler Mark Goodman Rick Radcliffe
Circuit Judges

112 S. Court Street, Room 2300

Sparta, WI 54656

Telephone: (608) 269-8700, (608) 269-8926, (608) 269-8875

January 23, 2024

The Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety


Dear Committee Members:


We have reviewed the three bills related to judicial security, Assembly Bills 965, 966 and 967 that are on for a public hearing on January 24th. Unfortunately, we are not able to attend and provide testimony.


While we are not able to attend, we do fully support each of these bills. Judicial security is a significant issue and has come more to the forefront over the last couple of years with the killing of a retired circuit court judge in an adjacent county to ours. In addition, there have been many instances across the country that support the strong need to address security for the judiciary. The bills address privacy for judges and an increased ability for us and our families to feel safe and secure in our homes. The proposed legislative efforts are an excellent step toward providing more safety and security for our entire judiciary, our spouses, significant others, and children.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

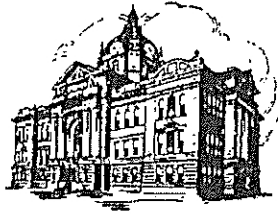

Todd L. Ziegler
Circuit Judge, Branch I


Mark L. Goodman
Circuit Judge, Branch II


Rick Radcliffe
Circuit Judge, Branch III

Beau G. Liegeois
Circuit Judge

Sally A. Menghini
Judicial Assistant
920-448-4129



Jennifer J. Fick
Official Court Reporter
920-448-4128

Dawn A. Willems
Court Coordinator
920-448-4170

CIRCUIT COURT BRANCH VIII

Brown County Courthouse
100 South Jefferson Street
P.O. Box 23600
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54305-3600

January 23, 2024

To the Wisconsin State Legislature:

I am the Circuit Court Judge elected to preside over Branch VIII of Brown County Circuit Court.

I am in SUPPORT of the proposed Judicial Security Package legislation.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Beau Liegeois".

The Honorable Beau G. Liegeois
Brown County Circuit Court Judge
Branch VIII



Honorable Jeffrey S. Froehlich

Rhonda Neumann, Register in Probate/Juvenile Clerk
Debbie Duquaine, Court Reporter | Lea Calaway, Judicial Assistant

206 Court Street, Chilton, WI 53014
Office: (920) 849-1465 | Toll Free: (833) 620-2730
Fax: (920) 849-1406 | www.calumetcounty.org

October 20, 2023

Cameil Bowler (via email)

Re: AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading
AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles
AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy

Dear Ms. Bowler:

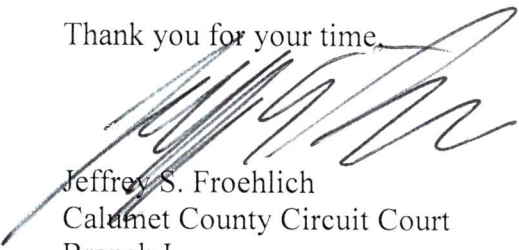
I am writing in support of AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading, AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles and AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy.

I was unaware the bills were already up for public hearing.

I am one of two judges here in Calumet County. It is a fairly small, mostly rural community with the highest population density in the northern part of the county. Even in a small county like this we have need of these laws. My predecessor, Judge Donald Poppy, had his home picketed by animal rights groups while presiding over a case some years ago. I am presiding over a case right now where the defendant told law enforcement at the time of his arrest that he “knew where the Judge’s cabin was”. After his last court appearance, the defendant went into the Clerk of Court’s Office and proclaimed “that judge needs to be slapped”.

I have heard similar stories from my fellow judges. Two years ago, an individual filed for an injunction in my court for a restraining order against a number of government officials including Sheboygan County Judge Samantha Bastil. This legislation is overdue.

Thank you for your time.


Jeffrey S. Froehlich
Calumet County Circuit Court
Branch I



**County of Door
CIRCUIT COURT**

Justice Center
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235

January 23, 2024

To The Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

We write in support of the Judicial Security Legislation Package before you for consideration.

The judicial system is a vital part of our government. Judges and court commissioners throughout the state interpret and apply the laws that govern us. Judicial independence is imperative for society's confidence in the courts and the public's trust in its government. Security and safety of judicial officers supports an independent, fair, and competent judiciary. Court officials should not be intimidated, threatened or otherwise placed at risk just for doing their important work.

At the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Judicial Conference, Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Annette Ziegler addressed judicial security at the gathering stating, "Security enhances our ability to adhere to the basic tenant of judicial independence." We agree with her and believe that the legislation before you promotes judicial independence and therefore, the rule of law.

Thus, we ask that you approve as written AB 967/SB 928 – Public Records Exemption of Judicial Security Profiles and AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy. We ask the you approve AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading modified to apply to all judicial officers for the same reasons that the other bills apply to judicial officers. All judicial officers should feel safe and secure in their own homes.

We thank you for taking up these important matters that directly impact the legal system.

D. Todd Ehlers
Circuit Court Judge, Branch 1
Door County Circuit Court

David L. Weber
Circuit Court Judge, Branch 2
Door County Circuit Court

Jennifer A. Moeller
Door County Family Court Commissioner

January 23, 2024

State of Wisconsin Assembly
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Sent Via Email: Cameil.Bowler@legis.wisconsin.gov

To the Members of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

I am a Sheboygan County Circuit Court Judge. Although I, along with my colleagues in Sheboygan County, sent a general letter in support of the pending legislation related to judicial security, I am sending this separate letter relevant to two death threats I received last year.

The first involved a litigant named Jeffery Freye. He filed multiple letters and documents directing anger toward me and others. I eventually recused myself from his case after two incidents: First, on January 11, 2023, he entered the courthouse and attempted to leave a pound of meat for me. It was wrapped in white butcher paper, and was leaking a red substance consistent with raw meat. He wrote a message on the packaging to the effect of “Here is some burger to Freye and burn like you burned me.” He spelled the word Freye to mirror the spelling of his last name. He left the package with my court reporter. Deputy Tennesen of the Sheriff’s Department was able to intercept the package and it was returned to Mr. Freye with a warning to stop his behavior. Thereafter, I received a letter from Mr. Freye, which included a statement that he hopes I vomit, that someday I will be a rock or an albatross filled with plastic, and most concerning, that he couldn’t wait until he is an owl and can silently attack and puncture my lungs. As a result of his escalating behavior, I was advised to file a complaint with law enforcement. I did so, but it is my understanding he was given a second verbal warning. The incidents were not prosecuted, nor was he detained under a mental health hold. Court security implemented measures to ensure my safety at work, but there is nothing in place to prevent him from accessing my home address and other personal information. Indeed, I am sure he is aware of my address. He is computer savvy and told my court reporter he knew her address because he had found it online.

The second threat occurred in May of last year. Law enforcement approached me to warn me a past litigant named Alfred Lee Hudson had made a perceived threat to kill me or my family. As a result of the threat, Mr. Hudson was arrested and charged with Threat to an Officer of the Court, a Class H Felony, Disorderly Conduct, a Class B Misdemeanor, and Telephone Harassment, a Class B Misdemeanor, all with repeater enhancers. That case is still pending (see Sheboygan County case 23 CF 466), though it is being prosecuted out of county for obvious reasons. That threat took me by surprise since I had not had any contact with Mr. Hudson since I had sentenced him to probation in another criminal case approximately a year earlier.

Both of the people who made the threats have mental health concerns. Both have acted irrationally. And both can easily access my home address.

I personally know four other judges who have received serious threats in the last few years. As public officials, we all accept our jobs carry a certain amount of risk. My concern, and the concern of my colleagues that received threats, are not primarily for ourselves, but for our families. The pending legislation is necessary to protect judicial independence and the rule of law. But on a personal level, it is also necessary to protect our loved ones. I hope you will support the passage of each bill.

Very truly yours,

Rebecca Persick
Sheboygan County
Circuit Court Judge Branch 4

**BRANCH THREE
DODGE COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT
JOSEPH G. SCIASCIA, CIRCUIT JUDGE**

Dodge County Justice Facility
210 W. Center St., Juneau, Wisconsin 53039-1091
Fax: (920) 386-3587

Tammy Wild
Phone: (920) 386-3552
Circuit Court Reporter

Jodie Miller
Judicial Assistant
Phone: (920) 386-3805

To: Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Re: Judicial Security legislation

January 23, 2024

Dear Committee Members,

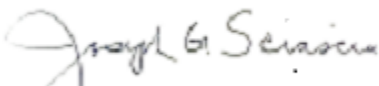
I am writing in support of the various pending legislation pertaining to judicial security, such as AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading, AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles and AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy.

As you know, the world is a different place than it was a few years ago. Violent attacks on law enforcement and others involved in the judicial system are much more common. It could be argued that a person who decides to get involved in the judicial system accepts the risks inherent in that decision, but their spouses and children, who are often the ultimate victims, should not be subject to those risks.

With regard to the Judicial Officer Privacy bill, AB966/SB927, it is often said that a judge's personal information is "out there" and cannot be protected. You may recall that a few years ago, social security numbers were "out there" on drivers licenses and a lot of other places. Once it was realized that such information needed to be protected, we were able to make it much more difficult for someone to access that information.

The recent murder of Judge Roemer, at a time when he should have been enjoying his retirement, should serve as a warning that the danger is real and that we owe it to the future members of the judicial system to take effective action now. Unfortunately, I am unable to appear in person to support this legislation, so I must confine my remarks to this short letter. Please take action to get this legislation passed as soon as possible.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joseph G. Sciascia
Circuit Court Judge, Br. 3, Dodge County, WI



Circuit Court of Ozaukee County

Barry J. Boline

Court Commissioner
OZAUKEE COUNTY JUSTICE CENTER
1201 S. SPRING STREET
P.O. BOX 994
PORT WASHINGTON WI 53074

Jaclyn McCoy
Deputy Clerk

January 19, 2024

Representative Ron Tusler
Post Office Box 8953
Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8953

Via email only: rep.tusler@legis.wisconsin.gov

Re: AB-965, AB-966 and AB-967; SB-926, SB-927 and SB-928
Wisconsin Association of Judicial Court Commissioners and
Wisconsin Family Court Commissioners Association positions

Dear Representative Tusler,

I write as the executive secretary of and on behalf and with the presidents of the Wisconsin Association of Judicial Court Commissioners and the Wisconsin Family Court Commissioners Association to express our strong support for these bills, subject to the technical corrections deftly outlined in Judge Ginkowski's correspondence to you of January 19, 2024, which I will not reiterate here.

The legislature, in enacting Wis. Stat. §940.203(1)(b), recognized a broad definition of "judge" when criminalizing behavior directed toward certain court officials; that same breadth of definition should likewise apply in the above referenced bills.

If you have any questions, or would like further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Barry J. Boline
Circuit Court Commissioner
Executive Secretary, Wisconsin Association of Judicial Court Commissioners
Secretary, Wisconsin Family Court Commissioners Association

Cc: Rep. Sheila Stubbs via email only
Sen. Van Wanggaard via email only
Sen. Lena Taylor via email only
Rep. Tip McGuire via email only
Rep. Amanda Nedweski via email only

Circuit Court

ELLEN R. BROSTROM
JUDGE



LATASHA SIMS
DEPUTY COURT CLERK

January 23, 2024

VIA EMAIL

Senator Daniel Knodl
Representative Deb Andraca
Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Dear Sir or Madam:

Re: Judicial Security Legislation

I am a Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge. I was elected in 2009 and re-elected in 2015 and 2021. Personal security for me and my family is a paramount concern. The proliferation of violence against elected officials, and in particular judges, is always on my mind. The murder of former Juneau County Circuit Court Judge John Roemer in June, 2022 is a tragic and terrible reminder of how vulnerable we are.

I ask that the legislature pass the following legislation: AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading; AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles; and AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ellen R. Brostrom". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Ellen R. Brostrom

Honorable Ellen R. Brostrom, Branch 6

Milwaukee County Courthouse 901 North 9th Street Milwaukee WI 53233

The Honorable Annette M. Barna
Rusk County Circuit Court Judge
Rusk County Courthouse
311 Miner Ave. E., Suite C-322
Ladysmith, WI 54848
Fax: (715) 532-2266

Karie Kennedy
Judicial Assistant
Register in Probate
karie.kennedy@wicourts.gov
715-532-2150

Lori Gorsegner
Juvenile Clerk
lori.gorsegner@wicourts.gov
(715) 532-2108

Shay Beres
Court Reporter
shay.beres@wicourts.gov
715-532-2149

To: The Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

RE: Judicial Security Legislation
Bills: AB 965/SB 926
AB 967/SB 928
AB 966/SB 927

Dear Legislators,

I write in full support of the proposed Judicial Security Package that includes the Bills noted above, and request you approve them as written.

As a current judicial officer who is a victim of threats by a convicted defendant who is about to be released, and as a previous prosecutor who has heard from other judges who are victims of threats against them, I can personally attest to the stress and anxiety caused by this. Knowing that it is so easy for anyone to find personal information to locate me and/or my family is a constant reminder of the threats I have received.

These proposed Bills at least provide some protection to judicial officers and their family members while still maintaining individual constitutional rights.

I strongly urge you to pass this legislation to try to provide some assistance in protecting those who take an oath to serve the people of this state every day.

Respectfully,

Annette M. Barna

Rusk County Circuit Judge, Branch 1



Supreme Court of Wisconsin

DIRECTOR OF STATE COURTS

P.O. BOX 1688

MADISON, WISCONSIN 53701-1688

Annette Kingsland Ziegler
Chief Justice

16 East State Capitol
Telephone 608-266-6828
Fax 608-267-0980

Hon. Audrey K. Skwierawski
Director of State Courts

January 24, 2024

Hon. John Spiros, Chair
Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Room 415 Northwest, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Representative Spiros and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing me to submit this letter on the Judicial Security Package made up of Assembly Bills 965, 966 and 967 before the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

I am so grateful to each and every one of you for holding this hearing today. Anyone watching or reading the news during the last several years cannot have failed to notice the increase in acts of violence toward judicial officers. Judges and their family members throughout this country have been physically attacked outside the courts in their own homes where they have the least protection and are the most vulnerable. Wisconsin has not been spared this epidemic of violence. In 2022, following the terrible and tragic murder of one of our retired circuit court judges, Chief Justice Ziegler redoubled efforts for improving the security and safety of all justices and judges in our court system.

Judges occupy a unique position in our democracy. They must make difficult and life-changing decisions many times every day, from awarding large financial awards, to determining the details of a fraught divorce, to removing children from abusive homes, to sentencing convicted criminals to decades in prison. Our system is an adversarial system. As such a judge's decision in any given case almost always angers or disappoints at least one party. And a typical judge hears hundreds or even thousands of such cases each year. Part of a judge's dedicated service is knowing that unavoidably, he or she must live with the thought that for the rest of their lives, there will be thousands of people out there in the world who are upset about their decisions.

Despite this heavy burden, each Wisconsin circuit court judge is dedicated to making decisions without regard to the emotions those decisions might evoke in participants or their families. Each judge takes an oath to support both the Constitutions of the United States and our state, swearing to "administer justice without respect to persons" faithfully and impartially. Wis. Stats. § 757.02. In order to fulfill this role in our constitutional democracy, judges must be independent and cannot be swayed by sympathy or prejudice

or indeed fear of making the decision they believe to be correct under the law and facts of a case. Those who seek to do violence toward judges aim to undermine this independence, instilling fears of retribution or reprisal that undermine the very foundation of the judicial branch.

These three bills aim to protect judges and their families from this kind of subversive violence. AB 965 recognizes judges' rights to feel secure in their homes and in the carrying out of their constitutional duties, while recognizing the balance that must be struck with free speech and assembly rights. AB 967 exempts from disclosure under public records law judicial security profiles which amount to emergency response plan blueprints exposing security weaknesses in a judge's home so that law enforcement can work to develop a plan that minimizes those weaknesses. AB 966 protects judges' personal identifying information from disclosure, modeled on several other state acts as well as the Federal Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act of 2022.

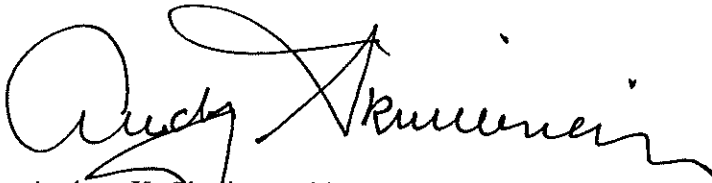
AB 966 in particular requires the Director of State Courts Office to establish a policy and procedure to allow judicial officers who choose to do so, to submit a request for protection of personal information. The Director of State Courts Office is ready and willing to develop such a request procedure and stands ready to provide quarterly notice of any requests to government agencies. To the extent that the process or the requests themselves create challenges for other government agencies, our office will work cooperatively to identify possible solutions. We are confident that cooperatively we can work to resolve complexities identified by our esteemed government and private industry colleagues in their submitted documents. Similar legislative acts have been passed in other states and the federal government—the implementation process will not operate without a roadmap.¹

As U.S. District Judge Esther Salas put it upon passage of the federal “Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act,” “Judges, and their families, should not live in fear for doing the job they are sworn to do. As a nation and as a people, we cannot accept this. This legislation will make it harder for violent individuals to find judges' addresses and other personal information online. By better protecting judges, the bill also helps safeguard the judicial independence guaranteed by the Constitution.”² Respectfully, these same sentiments apply to today's proposed legislation. Protecting our Wisconsin judicial officers in turn protects their independence, which in turn protects our Constitution—the very lifeblood of our democratic system of government.

¹ National Center for State Courts, “Gavel to Gavel: 2023 laws to protect judges and their families,” August 23, 2023. <https://www.ncsc.org/information-and-resources/trending-topics/trending-topics-landing-pg/gavel-to-gavel-2023-laws-to-protect-judges-and-their-families>

² United States Courts, Judiciary News, “Congress Passes the Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act,” December 16, 2022. <https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2022/12/16/congress-passes-daniel-anderl-judicial-security-and-privacy-act#:~:text=%E2%80%9CJudges%2C%20and%20their%20families%2C,people%2C%20we%20cannot%20accept%20this.>

Thank you for your kind consideration of these important bills. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Chief Legal Counsel Karley Klein.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Audrey Skwierawski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "S".

Audrey K. Skwierawski
Director of State Courts