Van H. Wanggaard
Wisconsin State Senator

TESTINOMY ON JUDICIAL SECURITY PACKAGE

Thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members for today's hearing on Senate Bills 926, 927, and 928. I appreciate you taking the time to hear these bills, and allowing my testimony on these bills all at once.

As I hope you can all recognize, passions run high in the judicial system. By its very nature, the judiciary system tends to be adversarial. Nationally, we have seen protests and death threats against Supreme Court Justices and judges. We have seen protests outside the private homes of judges disrupting neighborhoods for months on end. Here in Wisconsin, a retired judge was killed in 2022 in direct relation to a case he had heard many years before.

Speaking with the former director of State Courts, the Supreme Court Marshal, and the Chief Justice, I've learned these are not isolated incidents, and not unique to Wisconsin. Threats and violence against members of the judiciary across the country have increased dramatically in the last few years. Senate Bills 926, 927, and 928 help members of the judiciary in basic, measured and common sense ways that protect their privacy and safety.

Senate Bill 926 creates a Class A misdemeanor for picketing in front of a residence of a judge with the intent to interfere with or influence a judge in his or her duties. This bill is based on a similar law in federal code that prohibits picketing or demonstrating at or near the residence of a judge. The city of Racine also has a law prohibiting residential picketing.

Senate Bill 927 is based on New Jersey, Illinois, California, and federal law among others. Similar language is expected to be in place in every state in the next two years. The bill takes reasonable steps to protect the private information of judges. Broadly speaking, it allows judges, and requires others, upon request, to keep certain information about a judge private. That information is common sense private information, such as: address, telephone number, personal email address, social security number, banking information, etc. To further protect judges, a judge may request for this privacy for their immediate family also. Knowingly publicizing the private information of a judicial officer with the intent to jeopardize the safety of a judicial officer would be a Class G Felony. Legitimate concerns were raised by data brokers, credit agencies, registers of deeds, and other interested parties. I believe that Senate Substitute Amendment 1 addresses most of those concerns, if not, I'm willing to listen.

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Finally, and perhaps the most common sense of these bills, is an exemption from the Open Records Law contained in SB 928. Judges can complete a judicial security profile to assist law enforcement in the development of an emergency response plan for the judge. These profiles contain personal details about a judge and his or her family. Because these are currently public documents, judges are hesitant to complete them. This bill will provide an exemption to the public records law for these documents.

Nationwide and in Wisconsin, we've seen the safety and security of judicial officers put at risk. I believe these common sense bills, modeled on other states, will improve the security of our judges, and help to mitigate risks, and I urge your support.

RON TUSLER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 3rd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 926
Senate Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety
February 6, 2024

Chair Wanggaard 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.

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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.

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Municipal Court
Village of Pleasant Prairie

SB926

Richard Alan Ginkowski, Judge

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January 31, 2024

Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Senator Van H. Wanggaard, Chair
Wisconsin Senate
E-mail: sen.wanggaard@legis.wisconsin.gov
eric.barbour@legis.wisconsin.gov

Re: AB965/966/967 and SB 926/927/928– Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association position

Dear Senator Wangaard and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety:

I write as president of the Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association to express our strong support for these bills subject to a technical correction included in the amendments which would harmonize the definition of "judge" and "judicial officer" between them and, in the interest of consistency and avoiding possible ambiguity and confusion, existing state law.

This proposed legislation tracks the Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act recently adopted by Congress. The federal law is named after Daniel Anderl, the son of U.S. District Court Judge Esther Salas. In 2020, Judge Salas' son was murdered and her husband was wounded when a former litigant in her courtroom found her personal information on the internet and came to her New Jersey home intending to kill her.

A chilling reminder that Wisconsin is not immune to this is the killing of retired judge John Roemer at his New Lisbon home by a man he had sentenced to prison 17 years earlier. Wisconsin judges and court commissioners are also not immune from threats from disgruntled litigants.

We ask that our legislature follow the lead of your counterparts in New Jersey and adopt the judicial security and privacy package of bills that mirror the Anderl Act. We also encourage amendments to harmonize the definition of "judge" and "judicial officer" in these bills with the existing definition of "judge" in the current battery or threat to a judge statute. Wis. Stat. §940.203(1)(b) defines a "judge" as "a person who currently is or who formerly was a supreme court justice, court of appeals judge, circuit court judge, municipal judge, tribal judge, temporary or permanent reserve judge, or circuit, supplemental, or municipal court commissioner."

The Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association believes the definition of "judicial officer" and "judge" in this legislation should be consistent with each other and also with the existing definition in Wis. Stat. §940.203(1)(b). Several of our members are also full-time or supplemental ("on call") circuit court commissioners. There should be no ambiguity or confusion as to which judicial officers are within the scope of this legislation and revising the language to harmonize it with the existing battery or threat to a judge statute consistent with the companion bills should be an easy fix.

Sincerely,

Dick Ginkowski

Richard Alan Ginkowski
Municipal Judge
President, Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association

STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

Leaders in the Law. Advocates for Justice.®

To: Members, Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
From: State Bar of Wisconsin
Date: February 6, 2024
Subject: Support for SB 926, 927, and 928 – judicial security

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The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the passage of SBs 926, 927, and 928, bills aimed at increasing judicial security by protecting the personal information of judges and shielding their homes from public demonstrations, and we commend Senators Wanggaard and Taylor as well as Representatives Tusler, Ortiz-Velez and Stubbs 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. SB 926 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, SB 927 and SB 928 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:
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SCOTT J. NORDSTRAND
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CIRCUIT JUDGE
BRANCH I

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

Regarding Judicial Security Legislation (SB 926, SB 927, SB 928)
Before the Senate Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety
February 6, 2024

Good morning. Chair Wanggaard, Vice Chair Jacque 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: SB 926, SB 927 and SB 928. 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. He was a veteran, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves, and previously served as both a public defender and an assistant district attorney. By all accounts, he was a bright, thoughtful, and caring judge.

In his retirement letter to the Governor, 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." Sadly, 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 SB 926: Senators Wanggaard and Taylor and Representatives Tusler and Stubbs; and SB 927 and SB 928: Senators Wanggaard and Taylor and Representatives Tusler and Ortiz-Velez. 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 resulting 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. Threats to judges like this are all too common in Wisconsin.

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.

SB 926 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.

SB 927 provides various means to help maintain the privacy of a judge's personal information, including: home address; personal phone numbers; personal email addresses; vehicle license plate numbers; government ID numbers; banking and credit information; marital status; date of birth; and the identity of a judge's immediate family members.

The amended version of this bill reflects changes made by the sponsors in consultation with affected government agencies and the Legislative Committee of the Wisconsin Judicial Conference. It includes the following judicial privacy protections and procedures for a judge and his or her immediate family:

1. A judge's personal information is made exempt from public records requests unless the judge has waived that protection.
2. A judge can make a written request that a government agency cease posting or making this information available to the public, which must be complied with in 10 business days.
3. A judge can make a similar request to any person, business or association, which also must be complied with in 10 business days.
4. A data broker is prohibited from selling or otherwise making the

information available for profit.

5. 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.

6. If a judge requests to keep personal information contained in campaign finance reports and statements of economic interests confidential, the Ethics Commission will comply with special procedures to prevent disclosure of the information including reviewing quarterly the electronic campaign finance information system for the personal information of judicial officers and removing personal information of judicial officers from the system.

7. Registers of deeds are required to establish a procedure to allow judges to opt out of displaying personal information on land record websites and to shield that information from disclosure on certain documents.

8. The bill requires the judge's requests to be made on a form prescribed by the Director of State Courts and authorizes the Director to assist judges in filing the requests with government agencies.

9. If any of the information is wrongfully made available, a judge can seek injunctive relief, including payment of costs and attorney's fees.

10. There is a "good faith" safe harbor for government employees against injunctive relief and penalties.

11. 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.

12. The effective date of the bill is delayed 12 months to ensure sufficient time for implementation of its provisions.

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, SB 928 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.

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STATE OF WISCONSIN

TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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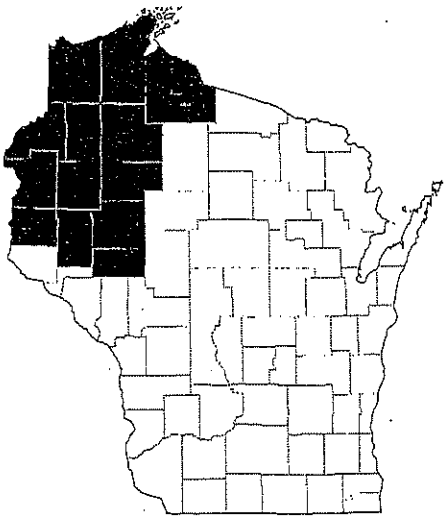

January 23, 2024

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

TESTIMONY OF JUDGE GUY D. DUTCHER

CHIEF JUDGE of the FOURTH JUDCIAL DISTRICT

Regarding SB 926, SB 927, and SB 928

Before the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

February 6, 2024

I offer this testimony in support of the pending judicial security legislation. I am Guy Dutcher, a circuit court judge from Waushara County and the Chief Judge for the Fourth Judicial District. I wish to offer a perspective that evolves from nineteen years as a judge and thirteen years as the district attorney in a rural Wisconsin county.

The legislation that you are considering would mitigate the dangers that now confront those who serve the public in a judicial capacity. Perhaps more importantly, it would lessen the hesitation and fear that often discourage qualified individuals from entering our profession after they conclude that any benefits derived from this form of public service are far outweighed by the legitimate risks that will be imposed upon their families and themselves.

Judicial officers perform a critical role within our trifurcated form of government. They are the independent arbiters of disputes and issues, often under circumstances where those involved experience some of the most

contentious and emotional circumstances that they have ever confronted in their lives. The process is, by definition, adversarial. Decisions and outcomes define who has prevailed and impose negative consequences upon those who have not. These consequences are frequently life altering and those immediately impacted are inclined to place responsibility for their hardship not upon themselves, but rather with the persons and system they feel has wrongfully tormented them. These circumstances provide fertile ground within which the sentiments and irrational thought process of a disgruntled litigant are spawned and grown.

There are occasions when these thoughts morph into threats. Most judges have already received tacit threats, usually in the form of frustrated utterances during or immediately following a court proceeding. These declarations can be initially disturbing but after time and experience, they blend into the challenges of what the job entails. However, some threats become more direct, more specific. These are true threats as defined in the law. Family members and their places of employment are identified. Specific plans are discussed. The potential location of an attack may be described and the weaponry that would be used to achieve the judge's demise is graphically introduced.

I have presided over two cases involving such direct, true threats against a judge. One case involved a disgruntled family court litigant who had outlined detailed intentions to end the life of a judge that had suspended all contact with the individual's minor children. This person expressed the intention of shooting the judge and then running her remains through a wood chipper.

The second case was even more concerning. An individual who had been the defendant in a criminal matter the judge had handled as a prosecutor spearheaded a conspiracy to kill the judge. He used his mother to arrange contacts with persons having known homicidal experience. A price was agreed upon, details of the judge's personal activities and patterned behavior were identified and a plan for shooting and killing the judge was formulated. Included within the scheme were scene arrangements that would deflect attention from the perpetrators and upon non-existent factions. The only intervening event that prevented this conspiracy from achieving its awful objective was intelligence developed within the correctional system that made the authorities aware of its existence. Thankfully, disaster never came to fruition.

I have a profound personal knowledge of the emotional turmoil that accompanies such life altering experiences. Comparatively trivial but disturbing

was when I installed a mailbox at my driveway one Sunday afternoon. I returned home on Monday to find it destroyed. Eight or nine years ago I was cycling on a remote road when a pick up truck came from the rear, brushed my arm with the side mirror and revved its glass packs while speeding away. I crashed into the ditch. The incident was highly personalized. I was at the time handling a high profile, controversial case within that specific area of the county and am certain that the perpetrator had recognized me when I rode through an intersection a few moments before.

A more troubling event happened in 2015. A disgruntled litigant from a case I had handled five years before had texted a friend and expressed intentions to come to the courthouse and to shoot the district attorney and myself with a sawed-off shotgun. The friend notified the authorities and they established a perimeter around the residence where this individual had barricaded himself. Ultimately, this person breached surveillance and was speeding toward the courthouse at well over 100 mph while operating a vehicle with puncture resistant tires that he had installed to nullify the effectiveness of stop strips. Two officers came into my office bearing fully automatic weapons. They directed me to a far corner as sirens from the law enforcement intercept were screaming in

the background. Fortunately, this individual was diverted before being apprehended in another county.

Sadly, incidents such as these are becoming more the norm rather than the exception. Persons who two decades ago would have begrudgingly, even vocally accepted a negative outcome in a peaceful manner today feel emboldened, empowered and are far more inclined to inflict hardship upon those they feel have wronged them. They are unwilling to recognize and observe lawful authority and the systemic boundaries that had previously insulated decision makers from personal attack.

When made, these attacks are far more likely to happen away from the security measures that protect most courthouses and courtrooms. Most judges would tell you that when confronting these realities that have become part of the job description, they fear something happening in the parking lot, on the drive to work or within the once sacred confines of their home. Examination of the plethora of attacks made upon judges confirms that far more danger looms away from the office than when at work. Nowhere is this danger more prevalent than where the nefariously intended are most likely to find us, at home.

Home. Home, it is where people escape the trials and tribulations of the day. Home is where we spend quality time with the people we love. Home is where we are supposed to find sanctity and protection for our families. Home is not where a kind, compassionate decision maker such a Jack Roemer should have been tortured and forced to bear the ultimate consequence for his public service.

WISCONSIN COURT OF APPEALS

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SENATE PUBLIC HEARING

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

February 6, 2024 – 10:01 a.m.

Re: Senate Bill 926 (as amended): 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: Senate Bill 927 (as amended): relating to privacy protections for judicial officers, granting rule-making authority, and providing a penalty.

Re: Senate Bill 928 (as amended): 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, ranging from Calumet and Manitowoc down to Racine and Kenosha). Previously, I served for seven years on the Waukesha County Circuit Court bench. 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 uncivil 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. Not so anymore.

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; his son escaped and called the police, but they did not arrive in time. In March, 2005, a judge, court reporter, and deputy were killed in their courtroom in Fulton County, Atlanta, Georgia; another deputy was wounded and a reporter was injured when the gunman carjacked him to get away. In August, 2017, a judge in Jefferson County, Ohio, was shot in the stomach as he walked to his courthouse; he survived. 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 just 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. Not only do judges feel concern for their families, but they feel that same level of responsibility for the safety of their courthouse staff—their second family in a way.

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 after the son of a man I sentenced to prison exploded in anger in court, had to be subdued in the hallway, and then was seen driving slowly through our parking lots. 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've met criminal defendants I've sentenced at stores, at weddings, and in other public settings. I have been encouraged to alter the path I drive home each night, to watch which packages are delivered to my door making sure that they are expected (and with Amazon that's now even more of an issue), and to not mention that I am a judge 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 absolute honor to serve this State. But, we do not deserve to have to worry about not only ourselves, but our families and staff, each and every day. 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. Thank you.

Outagamie County Est. 1851

CARRIE A. SCHNEIDER
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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 it's 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 J. 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

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.

Senate Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety

Senator Van Wanggard,Chair
Senator Andre' Jacque, Vice Chair

It has come to my attention that the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety is holding a public hearing on Senate bills 926, 927, and 928 February 6, 2024.
I am writing this in support of all three bills .
Please consider recommending the passage of these bills because it has to do will the safety of all judges in the state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Municipal Judge
John LaCourt Marinette

Michael A. Langel
8545 234th Ave
Salem, WI 53168

mlangel@voslwi.org

262-945-1803

02/02/2024

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Senator Van Wanggaard (Chair)

Subject: Support for Senate Versions of Judicial Security Legislation Package (SB926, SB927, and SB928)

Dear Senator Van Wanggaard, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety,

Senator André Jacque, Vice Chair
Senator Eric Wimberger
Senator Daniel Knodl
Senator Jesse James
Senator Kelda Roys
Senator LaTonya Johnson

I am writing to express my strong support for the Senate versions of the Judicial Security Legislation Package, specifically Senate Bills SB926, SB927, and SB928. As a concerned citizen and current Municipal Judge for the Village of Salem Lakes, I believe that these proposed measures are crucial for ensuring the safety and security of our judiciary, an essential component of a functioning and just legal system.

The protection of our judicial system is paramount, and the Senate versions of these bills address key issues related to our personal judicial security. The provisions laid out in SB926, SB927, and SB928 demonstrate a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to enhancing the safety measures for our judiciary.
I urge the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety to consider the long-term benefits of enacting these bills into law. The proactive measures outlined in SB926, SB927, and SB928 have the potential to fortify the foundations of our judicial system, ensuring its continued effectiveness and integrity.
Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your commitment to upholding the principles of justice and security. I trust that your careful consideration of these bills will lead to their endorsement and eventual enactment.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Langel
Village of Salem Lakes
Municipal Judge

Mr Barbour:

as presiding judge in Marinette county, and on behalf of my colleagues, Judge, Seguin, and commissioner Kallgren, we want to express our strongest possible support for Did judicial security package which will be before your committee on Tuesday. It is a very important proposal and it merits the support, we believe, of every legislator. Thank you.

Judge Jim Morrison
715 732 7471

Dane County Circuit Court
215 S HAMILTON STREET
Madison, Wisconsin 53703-3290

February 2, 2024

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
State Capitol
Madison, WI

Dear Chair Wanggaard and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety:

The undersigned Dane County Circuit Court Judges and Commissioners support and endorse the judicial security package, consisting of SB 965/SB 926, AB 967/SB 928, and AB 966/SB 927.

We believe the package provides important tools to protect the safety of Wisconsin judicial officers and their families. Recent events in Wisconsin and nationwide have unfortunately shown the necessity of these increased protections. We urge the swift passage and enactment of these bills.

Sincerely,

Circuit Court Chambers

of the

Hon. Lyndsey A. Boon Brunette

Judy Zickert
Court Reporter

Branch 1
517 Court St.
Neillsville, Wisconsin 54456
Telephone
715-743-5172

Lisa Hinker
Judicial Assistant

To Legislators considering Assembly Bills 965, 966, and 967 Senate Bills 926, 927 And 928

I write in full support of the pending legislation noted above. In my first five and half years on the bench, I have had numerous security incidents related to my service as an elected circuit court judge. That has included defendants and court participants coming to my house, mailing my family members letters, approaching me in the courthouse parking lot, and tracking my location when I am on private time. These are personal examples of direct and indirect threats to our safety and security both at the courthouse and at our residences as court officials. The proposed legislation will help to give us privacy in our residences by making locating our homes more difficult. It will allow better planning and protection to aid in any necessary law enforcement response and protection to judicial officers outside of the courthouse.

I respectfully ask you to support this important legislation to create additional safety and security measures for judicial officers and their families in the State of Wisconsin through the enactment into law of Assembly Bills 965, 966, and 967 and the corresponding Senate Bills, 926, 927, and 928 to aid in those safeguards

Dated January 24, 2024, at Neillsville, Wisconsin.

Hon. Lyndsey A. Boon Brunette
Clark County | Branch 1
Circuit Court Judge

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

Feb. 2, 2024

Dear Committee Members,

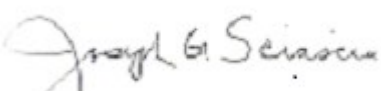
I am writing in support of the various pending legislation pertaining to judicial security, such as AB 965/SB 926 – Picketing and Parading, AB 967/SB 928 – Public Record Exemption of Judicial security Profiles and AB 966/SB 927 – Judicial Officer Privacy.

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

CARL ASHLEY
Chief Judge
Telephone: (414) 278-5116

JANE CARROLL
Deputy Chief Judge
Telephone: (414) 257-7150

WILLIAM S. POCAN
Deputy Chief Judge
Telephone: (414) 278-4512

STEPHANIE A. GARBO
District Court Administrator
Telephone: (414) 278-5115

STATE OF WISCONSIN

FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

MILWAUKEE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
901 NORTH NINTH STREET, ROOM 609
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53233-1425

TELEPHONE (414) 278-5112
FAX (414) 223-1264
WEBSITE: www.wicourts.gov

February 2, 2024

Honorable Legislators:

Re: Legislators Considering Senate/Assembly versions of the Judicial Security Legislation Package (AB 965/SB 926, AB 967/SB 928, AB 966/SB 927)

On behalf of the Circuit Court Judges in District One, Milwaukee County, I as Chief Judge want to advise the Committee that the Judges in District One overwhelmingly support the Judicial Security Legislation Package.

Carl Ashley

Hon. Carl Ashley, Chief Judge
First Judicial District

Barron County Circuit Court

James C. Babler
Branch 1

Branch 2

Maureen D. Boyle
Branch 3

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

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

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

February 2, 2024

Senate Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety
State Capital
Madison, WI 53701

RE: JUDICIAL SECURITY PACKAGE BILLS

Dear Senators:

Judge Boyle and I strongly support the passage of AB 965/SB 926, AB 967/SB 928, and AB 966/SB 927, all of 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 affect the safety and privacy of the Judges but of their families. We urge you to adopt these three bills.

Very truly yours,

JAMES C BABLER
Circuit Judge

MAUREEN D BOYLE
Circuit Judge

WISCONSIN
Calumet County
Circuit Court – Branch I

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

February 2, 2024

Eric Barbour (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 Mr. Barbour:

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

February 1, 2024

Wisconsin Senate Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Sent via email: Eric.Barbour@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

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

February 2, 2024

Senate Committee on Judiciary 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 February 6th. 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

FOND DU LAC COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

160 S. MACY STREET
FOND DU LAC, WISCONSIN 54935

February 2, 2024

State of Wisconsin Senate
Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Sent via email: Eric.Barbour@legis.wisconsin.gov

RE: Pending legislation

To the members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary 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

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

Samantha Bastil	*Natasha Torry*	*Angela Sutkiewicz*	*Rebecca Persick*	*George Limbeck*
Branch 1	**Branch 2**	**Presiding Judge, Branch 3**	**Branch 4**	**Branch 5**

Sheboygan County Circuit Court
615 N Sixth Street
Sheboygan WI 53081

February 2, 2024

State of Wisconsin Senate
Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Sent Via Email: Eric.Barbour@legis.wisconsin.gov

To the Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary 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

Eric
I write in support of the much needed security legislation. Members of the Third Branch of government unfortunately need these proposed measures to secure their safety in the world we live in.

Hon. Eugene A Gasiorkiewicz
Racine Circuit Court Branch 2
Sent from my iPhone

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

February 6, 2024

Senator Van H. Wanggaard, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Room 122 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

RE: Senate Bill 926, relating to picketing or parading at the residence of a judge
Senate Bill 927, relating to privacy protections for judicial officers
Senate Bill 928, relating to withholding judicial security profiles from public access

Dear Senator Wanggaard and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of **Senate Bills 926, 927, and 928**, and the proposed amendments. I would also like to thank authors Senator Wanggaard and former Senator Taylor, Representatives Tusler, Ortiz-Velez, and Stubbs, co-sponsor Representative Hurd, and the staff members of these offices 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 Senate Bills 926, 927, and 928. The Legislative Committee also worked to develop amendments to these bills to address feedback received on the bills as introduced and to ensure the package provided workable security tools.

These bills, together with the proposed amendments, 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

[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).

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.

SB 926 – Picketing and Parading

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.

The proposed amendment to the bill would harmonize the definition of "judge" with the other bills and statutory definitions, to apply to conduct at or near residences of persons who currently are or who formerly were a supreme court justice, court of appeals judge, circuit court judge, municipal judge, tribal judge, temporary or permanent reserve judge, or circuit, supplemental, or municipal court commissioner.

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 Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act of 2022.

SB 927 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. The proposed amendment would increase the timeline for a government agency that receives such a request to remove the information to 10 business days. If a judicial officer has submitted a written request, the agency shall not provide access to the information pursuant to a public records request.

To address feedback received, the proposed amendment to the bill would require the Ethics Commission to quarterly review the electronic campaign finance information system for the personal information of judicial officers and remove personal information of judicial officers from

the system. In addition, before providing a statement of economic interests of a judicial officer, the Ethics Commission shall remove the personal information of the judicial officer.

If the Ethics Commission receives a written request by a judicial officer, the personal information of a judicial officer contained in statements of economic interests, reports of economic transactions, and campaign finance reports that are filed with the commission by judicial officers or the candidate committees of judicial officers are not open to public inspection under Wis. Stat. § 19.55.

Also addressing feedback received, the proposed amendment to the bill would create a requirement for registers of deeds to establish processes for judicial officers and immediate family members of judicial officers to opt out from the display and search functions of their names on public-facing land records websites. The proposed amendment would apply the bill's requirements to electronic images of documents of registers of deeds and require shielding of documents containing personal information of judicial officers, versus redaction of the information from the documents, if the documents to be protected are specifically identified by the judicial officer in a written request.

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. The proposed amendment would increase the timeline to remove information to 10 days.

It also prohibits data brokers, as defined in the bill, 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.

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 proposed amendment increases the bill's delayed effective date to 12 months from enactment.

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 proposed amendment to the bill would harmonize the definition of "judge" with the other bills and statutory definitions.

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,

Chief Justice Annette K. Ziegler

Annette Kingsland Ziegler
Chief Justice, Wisconsin Supreme Court

cc: Members of Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

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

February 5, 2024

Sen. Van Wanggaard, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Room 122 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Wanggaard and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing me to submit this letter on the Judicial Security Package made up of Senate Bills 926, 927 and 928 before the Senate Committee on Judiciary 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 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 of the 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 granting 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 with their decision.

Despite the 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 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 fulfil 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 protect judges and their families from just such independence-subverting violence. SB 926 recognizes the 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. SB 928 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. SB 927 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.

SB 927 in particular allows judicial officers who choose to do so, to submit a request for protection of personal information. The requests are to be on forms prescribed by the Director of State Courts Office. In addition, judicial officers may submit requests for government agencies to the Director of State Courts pursuant to policies and procedure developed by the Director of State Courts Office. The Director of State Courts Office is ready and willing to develop these forms and procedures, 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 this 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

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

Sincerely,

Hon. Audrey K. Skwierawski
Director of State Courts

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

February 5, 2024

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
P.O. Box 7882
Madison WI 53707
VIA EMAIL ONLY

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

Greetings Senators:

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 about 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 the 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 about myself too much. However, what I really worry about is my family. They 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 02/06/2024, specifically AB 965/SB 926, AB 967/SB 928, and AB 966/SB 927.

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

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
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Shay Beres
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715-532-2149

February 4, 2024

To: The Senate Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

RE: Judicial Security Legislation
Bills: SB 926
SB 928
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 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.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you would like further information or have any questions.

Respectfully,

Annette M. Barna

Annette M. Barna
Rusk County Circuit Judge, Branch 1

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

February 1, 2024

Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Senator Van H. Wanggaard, Chair
Wisconsin Senate
E-mail: sen.wanggaard@legis.wisconsin.gov
Eric.barbour@legis.wisconsin.gov

Re: AB965, AB966 and AB967 / SB926, SB927 and SB928
Wisconsin Association of Judicial Court Commissioners' and
Wisconsin Family Court Commissioners Association positions

Dear Senator Wanggaard and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety:

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 outlined in Judge Ginkowski's correspondence to you of January 31, 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.

Sincerely,

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

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

711 North Bridge Street
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729-1876

February 2, 2024

Wisconsin State Senate

Dear Senators:

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 in this matter.

Respectfully,

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.

SAUK COUNTY
WISCONSIN

CIRCUIT COURT FOR SAUK COUNTY

Sauk County Courthouse
515 Oak Street
Baraboo, WI 53913
(608) 355-3222
FAX (608) 355-3514

PATRICIA A. BARRETT
Circuit Court, Branch 3

HEIDI DAVIS
Court Reporter
KRYSTLE E. NAAB
Judicial Assistant

February 2, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

I am writing to express my support for AB 965/SB 926, including AA1/AB965 (Picketing and Parading); AB 966/SB 927, including ASA1/AB966 (Judicial Officer Privacy); and AB 967/SB 928, including AA1/AB967 (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

Patricia A. Barrett
Circuit Court, Branch 3

WISCONSIN Clerks OF Circuit Court

Your Access to the Courts

January 22, 2024

Re: AB965/SB926, AB967/SB928, and AB966/SB927 – Judicial Security Legislation

Dear Governor Evers and Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature,

On behalf of the Wisconsin Clerks of Circuit Court Association (WCCCA), I am writing to express our unconditional support for the proposed judicial security legislation contained within AB965/SB926, AB967/SB928, and AB966/SB927.

There may be nothing more crucial to the administration of justice than the safety and security of our judicial officers. These officers cannot be expected to properly perform their jobs while living in fear for their safety and security.

Regrettably, we note that judicial officers, among other public officials, are increasingly confronted with threats, intimidating behavior and menacing rhetoric simply as a result of carrying out their sworn duties. The senseless murder of Juneau County Judge John Roemer in 2022 by an individual whom he had sentenced in a criminal case shone a light on the need for such legislation here in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's Clerks of Circuit Court stand in solidarity with our judiciary and urge passage of these important pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,

Wisconsin Clerks of Circuit Court Association
Stacy Kleist, President

Municipal Court
Village of Pleasant Prairie

Richard Alan Ginkowski, Judge

9915 39th Avenue
Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin 53158
(262) 705-3252
FAX: (262) 694-1401

January 31, 2024

Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Senator Van H. Wanggaard, Chair
Wisconsin Senate
E-mail: sen.wanggaard@legis.wisconsin.gov
eric.barbour@legis.wisconsin.gov

Re: AB965/966/967 and SB 926/927/928– Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association position

Dear Senator Wangaard and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety:

I write as president of the Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association to express our strong support for these bills subject to a technical correction included in the amendments which would harmonize the definition of "judge" and "judicial officer" between them and, in the interest of consistency and avoiding possible ambiguity and confusion, existing state law.

This proposed legislation tracks the Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act recently adopted by Congress. The federal law is named after Daniel Anderl, the son of U.S. District Court Judge Esther Salas. In 2020, Judge Salas' son was murdered and her husband was wounded when a former litigant in her courtroom found her personal information on the internet and came to her New Jersey home intending to kill her.

A chilling reminder that Wisconsin is not immune to this is the killing of retired judge John Roemer at his New Lisbon home by a man he had sentenced to prison 17 years earlier. Wisconsin judges and court commissioners are also not immune from threats from disgruntled litigants.

We ask that our legislature follow the lead of your counterparts in New Jersey and adopt the judicial security and privacy package of bills that mirror the Anderl Act. We also encourage amendments to harmonize the definition of "judge" and "judicial officer" in these bills with the existing definition of "judge" in the current battery or threat to a judge statute. Wis. Stat. §940.203(1)(b) defines a "judge" as "a person who currently is or who formerly was a supreme court justice, court of appeals judge, circuit court judge, municipal judge, tribal judge, temporary or permanent reserve judge, or circuit, supplemental, or municipal court commissioner."

The Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association believes the definition of "judicial officer" and "judge" in this legislation should be consistent with each other and also with the existing definition in Wis. Stat. §940.203(1)(b). Several of our members are also full-time or supplemental ("on call") circuit court commissioners. There should be no ambiguity or confusion as to which judicial officers are within the scope of this legislation and revising the language to harmonize it with the existing battery or threat to a judge statute consistent with the companion bills should be an easy fix.

Sincerely,

Richard Alan Ginkowski
Municipal Judge
President, Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association

Dear Senator Wanggaard,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for cosponsoring Assembly Bills 965, 966 and 967. As a judge in Branch 1 for Racine County, I am of the position that these Assembly Bills are extremely necessary and go a long way in protecting the judiciary of our fine state. The brutal homicide of retired Judge John Roemer of Juneau County sounded the alert of how vulnerable the judiciary is in Wisconsin.

On any given day in this state, a judge faces the glares and vocal threats of dissatisfied and unhinged individuals. Social media provides platforms for individuals to anonymously attack judges and incite others to act. I have been subject to profanity directed at me after a ruling and even had an individual offer to give another individual my home address. The latter incident actually occurred in the "reply" section of an on-line article from our local newspaper. Said individuals were upset over a sentence I gave in an animal maltreatment case.

We are sworn to uphold the U.S. Constitution and the Wisconsin Constitution. I like to think that the vast majority of us uphold that responsibility to our very core. The increase of threats and harassment to our judiciary in recent years must be met with strong rebuke from all three branches. Again, I thank you and your fellow legislative members for moving forward with this proposed legislation.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Judge Wynne Laufenberg
Racine County Circuit Court, Branch 1
262-636-3304
Racine County Courthouse
730 Wisconsin Avenue
Racine, WI 53403

Date: February 12, 2024
To: Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Chair Wanggaard and committee members
E-Mail: sen.wanggaard@legis.wisconsin.gov
Sen.Jacque@legis.wisconsin.gov
Eric.barbour@legis.wisconsin.gov
From: Martin Hying
RE: Senate Bills 926-928 Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Chair Waangaard and committee members,

I write this letter in objection to the narrowly scoped and self-serving aspects of these senate bills as they only serve to elevate the judicial branch above the purported co-equal executive and legislative branches. I ask that this objection be amended to the other responses posted.

Having read the more than thirty responses posted in support of this so far, I find it to be a very disappointing that these members of the judicial branch would show such disrespect for our state's open records laws. Further the hubris on display only imparts the conclusion that they place themselves, and only themselves, above the law. It is accepted rule that judges are responsible for their public records, and how exactly can a person request a public record if they cannot submit a written request when the custodian's address of record is obscured? The judicial branch has been taking unjustified and intentional subversive actions on this for years, You only need to request from the chief justice and director of state courts the e-mail thread dated June 9 &10, 2022 regarding the "Informational bulletin 22-XX" and /or the e-mail thread from attorney Gabler dated July 15, 2022 also in their possession. I swear these records exist, includes multiple entities within the judicial branch leadership discussing specific actions taken in response to avoid open records participation including instructions on how to remove this information, and if they refuse to produce it, I can avail my copy to you obtained via a legitimate open record request last year.

Judges are not in as much of a unique threat position as they place themselves. All public employees, from the governor to the senators and assembly men and women are all public servants who accept a responsibility of serving the public, and the public has a fundamental right to know that these servants are actually their neighbors and not some carpetbaggers who have relocated or are trying to assert authority granted upon them by the people of this state from locations beyond our state boarders. All are equally at risk to threats in society today. Any benefits derived from these bills comes at the direct expense of our open records legislature that the supreme court has stated on multiple occasions "*The Wisconsin Supreme Court intends to decide whether the state court system is subject to the open records law. The issue is currently under consideration by the court*" in their attempts to subvert these laws in the past. Given no ruling on this question has been made public yet, it appears they have abandoned this action and decided on another method of attack to avoid public accountability.

One point in particular I find very offensive is contained with Richard Ginkowski's letter where he cites Wis. Stat §940.203(1)(b) describing the definition of a judge. While this citation uses the terms "temporary or permanent reserve judge" as defined in Wis Stat §753.075, it is appalling

that these are not the terms used by the chief justice when circumventing the limitations on her authority with her attempts of annual appointments as defined in court forms GF-168G, GF-168S, and CS-196. Instead of these terms, these forms and the undated, unnumbered, unnamed policies used by the court are instead "reserve judge" and "emeritus reserve judge". I would direct you to the directory of reserve judges on the court's website, https://www.wicourts.gov/contact/docs/reservejudges.pdf but as of June 10, 2022, in response to a then unanswered open records request, the judicial branch took it upon themselves to remove this misinformation from their website. However, they continue to use the alternate, undefined terms on internal communications through at least 2023. All you must do is ask Melissa Lamb, who would be happy to provide this list any time you request it, provided you are a judge.

The escalation of threats to individuals are not unique to the judiciary either, even when they get more press than the average citizen. I again speak from first-hand experience, having received a promotion at work in 2022 that resulted in a coworker who felt slighted by the process who engaged in behaviors that escalated to my having additional security at my home and offices in multiple states for a period of weeks. Coincidentally, this individual was able to obtain my personal information from court records, publicly available via the systems maintained by the judiciary where I cannot have my personal information similarly obscured. To think that this problem only exists for judges or is more important simply because they are judges is unwarranted if you believe the constitutional doctrine that all men are created equal under the law.

A common thread amongst these documents is that we need these new laws to align with national standards regarding judicial practice. Here is an amendment I would request that this should be contingent on: In the interest of aligning with national standards, Wisconsin should abandon Diploma Privilege. The irony of this argument for equal federal protections without equal demonstration of legal aptitude is absurd as we should require all lawyers, or at least judges to pass either the state bar exam or the Uniform Bar Exam https://www.ncbex.org/exams/ube as is a requirement in every other judicial district. Ensuring that the judges can demonstrate a baseline of legal intelligence would go a long way before enacting any additional protections as these bills define.

Or how about a settlement on this question that has been thrown around since at least 2018 with Mark Belling's open records request that resulted in the sentiment "*The Wisconsin Supreme Court intends to decide whether the state court system is subject to the open records law. The issue is currently under consideration by the court*". We are 6 years since this public statement was made, and still no definitive answer from the court on this topic. It's as if they were not able to agree on that matter, so they now have an alternative strategy of making it impossible to submit an open records request to an indisputable records custodian.

There are far simpler solutions than obscuring their home addresses. How about maintaining a business address, or a Post office box if you want your home address to be obscured? Neither of these would require the labor of a bill as you have extended significant efforts to produce. Post office boxes are as low as $4.83 per month, far less than the cost of this legislation. https://www.usps.com/manage/po-boxes.htm

Or we review the judiciary's rampant fiscal irresponsibility, including its grossly excessive 2023 per diem policies of $569.45, far in excess of federal standards for Wisconsin https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/per-diem-rates-results?action=perdiems_report&fiscal_year=2024&state=WI This generous allotment was shared with every reserve judge in the annual reappointment letter sent at the beginning of their unlawful annual appointments. Again, if the court is unwilling to share these form letters with you, I would be happy to provide a copy of the open records sent to me last year. One day's per diem covers 9.8 years of a P.O.Box.

While I don't dispute that the judicial branch can be subject to threats, it presumes a level of innocence and demands a level of independence that is at the expense of any ability for the public to monitor what is really going on in the third branch. It assumes that it can only be a victim, yet I can personally attest that their actions have victimized me and I am sure others.

And this doesn't even begin the years of false claims and litigation by multiple judges, some like Judge Carl Ashley who are included in the responses, who have an established history of making false entries in court records including a recusal under false claims from May of 2013 where I was accused of threating his family, a crime I did not commit, I have never been convicted of, and have never been charged with by any district attorney, yet there is a court record referenced by multiple subsequent judges as if there was any truth to this court record. His abuse of authority continues by having my family law case assigned to a felony branch in the last 6 months after not being assigned to any branch for years. This is a situation where the court system has been crying wolf for years, and bills like these that would extend even greater protections to miscreants like him.

Lord Acton had it absolutely correct. "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely" Bills like these, taken without consideration of the full picture of misconduct of all parties and especially the benefactors, only serves to move closer to the latter to our state's detriment. We have laws on the books to address when these crimes occur. These records have been public for decades, and the number of actual threats (vs. perceived threats) or actions are no greater than those of other public servants in the executive or legislative branches, or in the private sector. While there might be a slight uptick in recent years, there is no material evidence that this is due to the availability of information in this information age. Taking action to benefit this very narrow subset of society usurps other laws put in place to protect us from their abuse of authority. I am deeply concerned that these bills will only result in the subversion of any controls that society imparts on these already independent public employees, or worse are being considered groundwork to subvert their own accountability by usurping open records laws at some point in the future.

Martin Hying
9300 Luane Drive
Mount Pleasant, WI 53406