

News Advisory

From the Rhode Island Judiciary



Chief Justice, Attorney General call for enhanced courthouse security after shooting

April 12, 2018: Courthouse venues throughout history have been places where disputes between parties may be resolved. In today's world, that may include civil disputes, criminal cases involving rival gang members and everything in between. While Rhode Island state courts have done everything they can with the resources they have to protect court users and staff within the four walls of the courthouses, it is clear to Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell and Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin that the situation is getting worse in the surrounding streets.

"The streets are becoming the battlefields of the gangs who lay in wait for rival gang members to emerge from court appearances," Suttell said. "Today shots were fired outside the Garrahy Judicial Complex in the direction of a public parking lot and main thoroughfare, surrounded by office buildings, restaurants and businesses, and it is fortunate that no one was killed. This is unacceptable.

"The frequency of such brazen activity in and around our courthouses in the middle of the day in very public areas only accentuates the need for timely attention to this escalating social issue," Suttell said.

"Today's shooting incident near one of our courthouses was frightening and potentially dangerous for all citizens and workers who had reason to be in the building as well as members of the public who were just going about their business in the downtown area," Kilmartin said. "Having this be the second incident of purported gang violence in a few short months – and the third such shooting incident in a little over a year – underscores the need for our courts to be provided with the resources to improve security both internally and externally. Preserving the safety of all who work in and utilize our courthouses and maintaining courtroom functions and decorum is imperative so justice can rightly be served for all."

After a similar shooting outside the Garrahy Judicial Complex in February, Chief Justice Suttell, the presiding justice of the Superior Court, the chief judges of the Family, District and Workers' Compensation courts and the state court administrator met with Governor Raimondo, and asked for more Capitol Police and sheriffs. At the Judiciary's recent budget hearing before the General Assembly, the state court administrator asked for more Capitol Police and sheriffs, recognizing that both divisions are part of the Executive Branch but integral to the courts' day-to-day operations.

The Judiciary will continue the emergency overtime hiring of armed state and Providence police, begun in February, to patrol court hallways. As a further step, the Judiciary has gone out to bid

for the hiring of armed private security officers to enhance perimeter patrols. Those proposals will be evaluated in the coming days.

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