

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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April 21, 2025

The Honorable John G. Roberts, Jr.
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of the United States
1 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20543

Dear Chief Justice Roberts:

We write to you about the alarming rise in threats of violence being made against federal judges, with many of these threats not being idle ones at all. The whole climate of anti-judicial violence and intimidation is intolerable within our constitutional order.

Since 1979, four federal judges have been murdered; several more have seen their own family members killed at the hands of defendants and court litigants.¹ Many others—and their family members—have endured repeated and lurid violent personal threats simply for doing their jobs.² We have seen a more-than-tripling of violent threats against judges over the last decade.³

There has been a pronounced escalation in recent months, as many judges have noted.⁴ Whether it is the most recent threat of a pipe bomb in the mailbox of a Supreme Court Justice's sibling or anonymous calls to dispatch SWAT teams to the home addresses of judges assigned to high-profile cases, this “illegitimate activity” comes to “threaten the independence of judges on which the rule of law depends,” as you observed in your 2024 Year End Report.⁵

¹ See e.g., Esther Salas, *My Son Was Killed Because I'm a Federal Judge*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 8, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/08/opinion/esther-salas-murder-federal-judges.html>; Jodi Wilgoren, *Electrician Says in Suicide Note That He Killed Judge's Family*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 11, 2005), <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/11/us/electrician-says-in-suicide-note-that-he-killed-judges-family.html>; Maria Cramer & Jesus Jimenez, *Armed Man Traveled to Justice Kavanaugh's Home to Kill Him, Officials Say*, N.Y. TIMES (Jun. 8, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/08/us/brett-kavanaugh-threat-arrest.html>.

² *Id.*

³ John G. Roberts, Jr., *2024 Year End Report on the Federal Judiciary* (2024), at 5, <https://www.supremecourt.gov/publicinfo/year-end/2024year-endreport.pdf>.

⁴ Mattathias Schwartz & Abbie VanSickle, *Judges Fear for Their Safety Amid a Wave of Threats*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 19, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/19/us/trump-judges-threats.html>.

⁵ John G. Roberts, Jr., *2024 Year End Report on the Federal Judiciary* (2024), at 5, <https://www.supremecourt.gov/publicinfo/year-end/2024year-endreport.pdf>.

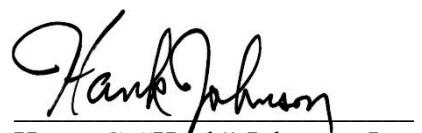
Judge Esther Salas of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey recently stated: “I feel like people are playing Russian roulette with our lives.”⁶ The threats against judges can all too quickly materialize into lethal assaults. Judge Salas suffered a horrific loss when a former litigant in a case shot and killed her son at her home in 2020 and critically injured her husband in the same attack.⁷ She continues to speak out for the safety of her colleagues despite this shocking crime and catastrophic loss.

Two appellate court judges, Jeffrey S. Sutton and Richard J. Sullivan, have described the wave of anti-judicial threats as a movement “attacking judicial independence.”⁸ Judges Sutton and Sullivan say the need to increase judicial security is dire and urgent, lamenting that funding has been “‘flat’ for the past two years.”⁹

Each and every one of these threats trouble us as not just Members of Congress who share the same kinds of threats in this hostile environment, but as Americans deeply invested in the ability of the judiciary to do its essential work without violent interference and intimidation. These threats of physical retribution against judicial officers for doing their job threaten the viability of the rule of law itself.

We want you to know that we are committed to assisting you in ensuring the safety of courthouses, judicial officers, your families, and your staff. To the extent any additional resources or authorities are necessary for you to do your work unencumbered please let us know as soon as practicable. We know our constitutional democracy relies strongly on the ability of Justices and judges to carry out your duties without fear of retaliation or harm. We are your partners in this endeavor, and we urge you to call upon us to help.

Sincerely,


Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Courts,
Intellectual Property, Artificial
Intelligence, and the Internet
Subcommittee

⁶ Mattathias Schwartz & Abbie VanSickle, *Judges Fear for Their Safety Amid a Wave of Threats*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 19, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/19/us/trump-judges-threats.html>.

⁷ Esther Salas, *My Son Was Killed Because I’m a Federal Judge*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 8, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/08/opinion/esther-salas-murder-federal-judges.html>.

⁸ Mark Sherman, *2 senior judges, appointed by Republicans, speak out about threats against federal judiciary*, ASSOC. PRESS (Mar. 12, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/judges-security-threats-impeachment-e4f6a57da81e7037cb9ef8693f26e17a>.

⁹ *Id.*

The Honorable John G. Roberts, Jr.

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cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman

The Honorable Darrell Issa, Chairman

Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, Artificial Intelligence, and the Internet

The Honorable Robert Conrad, Director

Administrative Office of the United States Courts

Colonel Gail A. Curley

Marshal of the Supreme Court of the United States