

STATE OF TEXAS

RESOLUTION

of the

TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Judicial Resources Committee Court Security Recommendations

WHEREAS, the Texas Judicial Council was created under Chapter 71, Texas Government Code and is charged with improving the administration of justice; and

WHEREAS, the Council has charged its Judicial Resources Committee with studying existing judicial resources and whether enhancements are needed; and

WHEREAS, during FY 2026 there were 142 threats reported to the Judicial Security Division and 11 court security incidents involving a judge's or court personnel's home address; and

WHEREAS, concerns remain that the judicial privacy protections afforded by statute are inconsistently applicable across familial relationships which sometimes results in inadvertent exposure for a judge because they reside with someone who does not have privacy protection; and

WHEREAS, threats to non-residing family members are on the rise nationally; and

WHEREAS, there are certain government databases where a judge's information continues to be exposed such as boat registrations and sales tax permit holders; and

WHEREAS, the Courthouse Security Fund is a portion of the local consolidated court costs collected in all criminal cases and certain civil cases; and

WHEREAS, the expenditures of the funds are under the exclusive control of county's commissioner's court and must be used for certain purposes, including screening tools, security infrastructure, security training, and security personnel; and

WHEREAS, HB 16, 89th Second Special Session, modified Government Code Section 74.0922 and made it one of the duties of a Court Security Committee to meet at least once annually and develop and submit recommendations to the commissioner's court on the uses of resources and expenditures of funds; and

WHEREAS, the committees lack access to information regarding the funds balance, collections, or expenditures or whether counties are following those committee recommendations; and

WHEREAS, requiring submission to the Office of Court Administration Judicial Security Division will provide transparency in the use of the funds as well as allow committees to quickly determine collections to make realistic recommendations; and

WHEREAS, a judicial branch photo identification would serve as a standardized wallet size card to verify a judge's credentials for the purposes of address confidentiality and license to carry eligibility and it would standardize courthouse admission for judges that serve multiple counties or judges who sit as visiting judges, ensuring consistent credential verification and efficient access to secured areas; and

WHEREAS, during FY 2025, more than 2,100 court security incidents were reported to the Judicial Security Division, a 97% increase over FY 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Division often does not receive information regarding whether a reported threat was investigated, referred to another agency, closed without action, or resulted in an arrest or prosecution; and

WHEREAS, requiring investigating law enforcement agencies to report the outcome of threat investigations to the Division would improve the accuracy of threat data, help identify recurring threats and trends, and strengthen statewide court security planning; and

WHEREAS, security in courthouses is of paramount importance; and

WHEREAS, in a recent survey of Child Protection Courts, multiple judges reported inconsistent security practices including the lack of security screening at courthouse entry points and no bailiffs assigned to courtrooms; and

WHEREAS, Maryland and Colorado recently convened legislatively created task forces including law enforcement, county officials, and judges to recommend minimum standards for courthouse security; and

WHEREAS, a similar study by OCA would help identify current practices, assess security needs across diverse courthouse settings, and provide an informed foundation for future statewide guidance on courthouse security;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Judicial Council respectfully recommends that the Legislature:

1. Amend statutes protecting the personally identifiable information (PII) of a judge's family to include the first degree of consanguinity, first degree of affinity, or a person residing with the judge, reducing gaps created by differing statutory definitions of protected family members. The Legislature should amend statutes to restrict other governmental databases publicly revealing PII of judges and court employees;
2. Require the County Auditor, or other individual designated by the commissioner's court of a county, to submit to OCA's Court Security Division the annual balance, collections, and expenditures of all Court Security Funds;
3. Create a statewide standardized Judicial Branch identification badge for judges to ensure efficient and secure identification; and
4. Require the law enforcement agency investigating a threat reported to the Judicial Security Division under Code of Criminal Procedure Article 102.017(f) to notify the Division of the outcome of the investigation.



Honorable Jimmy Blacklock
Chairman, Texas Judicial Council