

Statement of

The Honorable John Cornyn

United States Senator
Texas
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U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), Chairman

"Protecting the Judiciary at Home and in the Courthouse."

Wednesday, May 18, 2005, 8:30 a.m., Dirksen Senate Office Building Room 226

I want to thank Chairman Specter for scheduling this important hearing today. Courthouse security is a topic of great importance to me and to this committee.

I want to express my sincere condolences to Judge Lefkow for her loss and thank her for her appearance here today.

I have the greatest respect for our judiciary and for the men and women who sit on the bench - from the trial courts to the appellate courts, whether State or Federal. Judging cases, whether presiding over jury trials or deciding appeals on difficult issues, is one of the most important tasks embedded within our democracy.

Unfortunately, we have recently seen episodes of courthouse violence in this country, including in my home state of Texas. As a former judge myself for 13 years, who has a number of close personal friends who still serve on the bench today, I am outraged by acts of courthouse violence.

I personally know judges and their families who have been victims of violence, and I have grieved with those families. And during the Easter recess, I met with a leading Federal judge in Texas to make sure that we are doing everything we can to help protect our judges and courthouse personnel from further acts of violence.

Judges are impartial umpires of the law - they simply call the balls and strikes -- and they cannot help but disappoint people. But judges, witnesses, courthouse personnel and law enforcement must not face threats and violence for doing nothing more than simply carrying out their duties.

The protection of the men and women who comprise our judicial system is essential to the proper administration of justice.

The Judicial Conference raises important issues that this Committee should and will explore, including its working relationship with the United States Marshals Service. While the Marshals Service has the extremely difficult task of providing security for the judiciary while also fulfilling other responsibilities such as administering the witness protection program, transporting prisoners, and arresting fugitives, they should willingly coordinate and communicate with the judiciary on security concerns.

I hope to hear about the current working relationship between the Marshals Service and the Judiciary at today's hearing as well as other concerns the Judiciary may have over security. I also look forward to working with my colleagues to address these issues.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

