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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Urges Congress to Protect Federal Judges and Families



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody, a former judge, is asking the U.S. Congress to pass legislation to better protect federal judges. Joined by a bipartisan coalition of 50 attorneys general, Attorney General Moody today sent a letter to members of Congress urging support of federal legislation aimed at protecting the safety of federal judges and immediate family members.

Addressed to leaders of both the U.S. House and Senate Judiciary Committees, the letter supports passage of the Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act or similar legislation. The bill would protect the confidentiality of personal identifying information of members of the federal judiciary in public records and limit the distribution of that information online and by data brokers.

The letter calls passage of such legislation an “urgent matter”—in light of attacks and increasing threats against members of the federal judiciary—and notes that the legislation has bipartisan support in both houses of Congress.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “As a former judge, and the daughter of a sitting federal judge, I know firsthand the risks and sacrifices judges make to uphold their oaths and enforce the rule of law. It is infuriating and heartbreaking that these public servants and their families are being targeted because they volunteer to serve in these important roles.”

The DAJSP Act is named for 20-year-old Daniel Anderl, the late son of Judge Esther Salas of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey.

Daniel was killed on July 19, when an attorney who appeared in a case before Judge Salas—a man described in today's letter as deranged—appeared at her home and shot both Daniel and Judge Salas' husband. The judge's husband sustained critical injuries but survived the attack.

The joint letter to Congress recalls that four federal judges have been murdered since 1979, including District Judge John Wood, District Judge Richard Daronco, Circuit Judge Robert Vance and District Judge John Roll. In addition, two family members of District Judge Joan Lefkow were killed in a targeted attack at her home in 2005.

The letter notes that incidents, inappropriate communications and threats against federal judges and others protected by the U.S. Marshals Service have been steadily climbing in recent years—as evidenced by a spike in such incidents from 2,357 in 2016 to 4,449 in 2019.

Introduced in the Senate on Sept. 24, and in the House on Oct. 13, the DAJSP Act would, among other initiatives:

- Protect judges and their families by requiring federal agencies to maintain the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information of judges and their family members upon request;
- Authorize funding for state and local governments to adopt similar measures;
- Prohibit data brokers from selling, licensing, trading, purchasing or otherwise providing, or making available for consideration, judges' personally identifiable information; and
- Create an enforceable mechanism for judges and immediate family members to secure removal of their personally identifiable information from the internet.

In light of the tragic death of Daniel Anderl and the escalating danger to federal judges and family members, the attorneys general express full support for the legislation named in Daniel's memory and notes that the Judicial Conference of the United States and the American Bar Association, among others, support such legislation.

The letter concludes by noting that, while New Jersey and other states have enacted similar judicial protection laws on a state level, only federal legislation has the ability to protect federal judges and immediate family members wherever they reside and ensure uniform enforcement nationwide.

To read Daniel's Law, click here.

To read the letter, click here.

The threat judges face hit home in Florida in 2013, when a convicted felon sought revenge on U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Florida Timothy J. Corrigan. The gunman fired a single shot at the judge missing him by less than two inches.

Attorney General Moody is joined in supporting the legislation by a bipartisan coalition of

attorneys general from Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, the Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.