

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
April 15, 2024

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### **Wyoming Judicial Council, Senator Barasso, support legislation to increase safety of state court judges**

**Cheyenne, WY** – Chief Justice Kate Fox praised the introduction of new legislation in the United States Congress designed to help state courts address escalating threats of violence against judges, court staff, and the public. The legislation comes on the heels of a surge in both threats and actual acts of violence against judges across America, and in Wyoming.

“Local judges and court employees in Wyoming play an important role in our state and nation’s judicial systems. Judicial officers across the country deserve to do their jobs without fear or threats of violence,” said Senator Barrasso. “The growing threats against judges and their families is unacceptable. This bipartisan legislation ensures state and local judges and courts have the resources they need to keep our nation’s public servants safe and protect our judicial system.”

Chief Justice Fox, who also serves as Chair of the Wyoming Judicial Council, the governing body for the State judicial branch, said threats against Wyoming’s 55 judges and justices have increased in recent years. “It is critical for an independent judiciary to be able to make its decisions in accordance with the Constitution and laws, without fear of reprisal,” she said. “And judges are people, too. They and their families should be able to go to the grocery store without risk of being attacked.”

The *Countering Threats and Attacks on Our Judges Act*, co-sponsored by Senators John Cornyn (R-TX), Chris Coons (D-DE), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Jerry Moran (R-KS), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), is a vital step in ensuring the integrity of our judicial system.

“This legislation is a critical first step to helping increase the safety of every state court judge, our staffs and the public we serve,” said Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby,

president of the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and the top judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals.

“In just the last several years, we have seen sitting state court judges, retired judges and family members threatened, assaulted, and even killed by disgruntled people,” said Greg Sattizahn, president of the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA). “This is a very needed step and we are all grateful that Congress recognizes the need.”

The bill will establish a State Judicial Threat Intelligence and Resource Center to provide technical assistance, training, and monitoring of threats for state and local judges and court personnel; provide physical security assessments; and coordinate research to identify, examine, and advance best practices around court security. It will be housed within the existing State Justice Institute, a private non-profit and non-partisan corporation established by Congress in 1984.

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