

Will Threats Against Judges Continue to Be Taken Seriously?

Federal judicial officials face increasing danger in a polarized America while the resources to protect them go lacking

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It was only a matter of time before the threats against federal judges began.

Anyone with a basic understanding of the law could plainly see the deficiencies in many of the [executive orders](#) and policy directives issued by President Donald Trump in [his first month](#). There have been countless challenges in federal court, and judges, as is their wont, have largely ordered a return to *status quo ante* as the legal process plays out.

Despite the transitory nature of the rulings — they're called *temporary* restraining orders or *preliminary* injunctions for a reason — some Trump supporters who lack this understanding have flooded social media with threats against the judges, calling several of them “[evil](#),” “[radical](#),” “[corrupt scum](#)” and worse. Others have [cynically filed](#) articles of impeachment against them.

Thus escalates a [trend of increasing peril](#) for judicial officers in America today. But unlike in the past, many of the resources used to prevent these threats from turning into hostile acts are now suspect or severely lacking.

As background, the mission of keeping the country's [2,300 federal judges](#) safe is executed by the [US Marshals Service](#), America's oldest law enforcement agency and part of the Justice Department. There's a central US Marshals Service office outside of Washington, DC, and each of the country's 94 federal judicial districts has a US Marshal — nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate — who coordinates local security. There are roughly 4,000 deputy US Marshals working across several departments, with judicial protection a top priority.

This may sound like a lot of coverage, but it's not where the agency itself has said it needs to be. Plans to hire dozens more deputies in the last year were [slowed](#) amid department-wide budget cuts. Funding for judicial security as a whole remained [flat](#) last year, which in an era of high inflation is essentially a cut. The situation is so dire that one of the agency's most critical missions, protecting US Supreme Court justices at their residences, is being undertaken by newly minted deputies upon completion of their training. On top of that, deputies have just been [tasked](#) with assisting in the ramped-up activities of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Given typical federal workforce attrition [rates](#) of 5% to 10%, the Marshals Service would need to hire dozens of new deputies this year just to maintain current staffing levels. I asked the agency if it's exempt from Trump's hiring [freeze](#) and received a “no comment” from a spokesperson. That's not a good sign; neither is the “no jobs found” when you search for Marshals positions on USAJobs.gov.

Maintaining current staffing frankly won't be enough. What happens if several of the dozens of judges presiding over Trump-related cases need 24-hour protection due to new threats? Will the agency be up to the task? Per its own [budget](#) document, the answer is no. The service only has the resources to maintain round-the-clock security for 13 judges.

Elsewhere in government, we're hearing [stories](#) about workers being put on leave for attending DEI training. Yet just last year, as part of a settlement in a decades-long racial discrimination suit against the Marshals Service, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission mandated that agency personnel participate in "[annual DEI training](#)." Will staff get caught up in the anti-DEI dragnet simply for fulfilling this requirement? I wouldn't put it past this administration. What's more, in fiscal year 2023, the agency "hired 40 individuals with disabilities" under what it [called](#) its "affirmative action plan." Given Trump's executive [order](#) to "terminat[e...] diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility mandates [...] and activities in the Federal Government," would these positions also be on the chopping block?

The Marshals' contractors, who assist the agency in its judicial security work, may not be safe either. One of the [four](#) security contractors authorized to run courthouse metal detectors is a federally [registered](#) "Alaskan Native Corporation." Their most recent contract ended in the fall, but if they wanted to renew it, would their application be rejected out of hand for deigning to qualify as "minority-owned"? It sounds crazy that it would be, but given what we know it wouldn't be surprising — even as our courthouses [remain](#) targets that need a full complement of court security officers.

Finally, the direction of the agency's leadership remains largely unknown. Though historically nominees for US Marshal have received broad bipartisan support and have been confirmed by the Senate with little to no fanfare, does anyone believe that Trump's picks — 27 of the 94 positions are [vacant](#) — will be as nonpartisan as they were eight years ago? The Senate must vet the nominees and not simply act as a rubber stamp.

The already precipitous and tragic rise in threats against judges in the last decade — let's not forget those against Justices [Brett Kavanaugh](#) and [Sonia Sotomayor](#) and the targeted killings of judges in [Wisconsin](#) and [Maryland](#) in recent years — continues in 2025 unabated. Given the barrage of lawsuits against the new administration, the many Americans using social media to threaten judges, and our highly politicized world, we're going to need extra vigilance in the next four years to keep the third branch intact.

Judges shouldn't have to do their jobs in fear of their safety. That truism is key to their independence, which is the hallmark of their branch. That's why the threats against them — all of them — must be taken seriously, and the officials charged with their protection must be given the resources they need to do their jobs.