

House Republican Press Release

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Reps D'Amelio, Labriola; Sen. Hartley, Atty Porzio: Enhance Courthouse Security to Protect Public



Urge Support for 'Julie's Law' to Fund Courthouse Security Improvements

Courthouse security in Connecticut has not improved significantly since a woman involved in a bitter divorce case was murdered and her attorney seriously wounded in a shooting in the Middletown Courthouse parking lot in 2005, three state legislators and Julie Porzio, the lawyer who was wounded in the incident, said today.

Ms. Porzio and the legislators, state Representative David K. Labriola, R-131st District, state Representative Anthony J. D'Amelio, R-71st District, and state Senator Joan V. Hartley, D-15th District, spoke at a news conference today at the State Capitol, where they urged bipartisan support for a bill (HB 5678) that would provide funding to pay for a comprehensive security evaluation and additional security systems at courthouses, including parking facilities around the state.

On June 15, 2005, Michael Bocchichio, a retired State Police officer who was involved in a bitter divorce and custody battle with his wife Donna that was being tried at the Middletown Courthouse, shot and killed his wife and seriously wounded Ms. Porzio, his wife's attorney, in the courthouse parking lot. Bocchichio shot and killed himself after shooting his wife and Ms. Porzio.

"The horrific shootings were the culmination of threatening behavior that went unreported by the Connecticut Judicial System," Ms. Porzio said. "This devastating life-changing event could have been prevented if safety standards had been enforced and appropriate training had been given to those responsible for court security. Donna Bochicchio should be alive and thriving, not dead from multiple bullet wounds received in a place where she should have been completely protected."

"Legislative action is immediately required to ensure that our courts are safe and secure so that future tragedies like this can be averted. I deeply appreciate the concern and the intelligent response manifested by Representatives Labriola and D'Amelio and Senator Hartley, who are sponsoring this bill – and all the other legislators who will be supporting it in the weeks to come," Ms. Porzio said.

"As an attorney who has argued cases in several courthouses around the state, I believe that court security is inadequate," Representative Labriola said. "While court security is better than it was before the June 15, 2005 shootings in Middletown, significant upgrades

still need to be made to adequately ensure the safety of courthouse personnel and members of the public. We believe that our bill, which we are calling 'Julie's Law,' to honor her efforts to enhance courthouse security in our state, will provide the funding necessary to protect our citizens. It's our hope that it will enjoy widespread bi-partisan support and become law this year."

"At some point, almost all of us have to visit a courthouse. We should be able to do so without having to worry about becoming a crime victim while we are on the premises," Representative D'Amelio said. "We cannot allow what happened to Julie Porzio on that terrible day in June 2005 to be repeated ever again. Julie is one of my constituents and I took what happened to her very personally. We need to take a long hard look at courthouse security in our state, determine what improvements have to be made, and do whatever is necessary to ensure the safety of our citizens. Enacting our proposal into law is the first step toward restoring confidence in the security of Connecticut's courts. I urge all of my colleagues in the General Assembly to support it."

"The security of our courthouse facilities is necessary to ensure the safety of the citizens of Connecticut, who use the courthouses across the state. It is also a paramount concern for court personnel and staff," said Senator Hartley. "Courthouse security and safety is without a doubt a critical issue, which should be duly considered and supported as we go forward."

The legislation would provide \$1,000,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, to fund an evaluation of security in courthouse parking areas, and \$9,000,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, to fund the installation of security systems.