

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS  
FY 2013 Budget Initiative**

**ENHANCING PUBLIC SECURITY**

<b>Initiative Element</b>	<b>Requested Increase</b>
2 FTE, Security Screeners for Mail (JS-6)	96,000
Security Equipment: Optical Barriers in Moultrie Courthouse (JM-level), Buildings A, B and C	105,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 201,000</b>

Problem Statement. The 9/11 terrorist attacks heightened concerns for the safety and security of the District of Columbia Courts given the nature of matters handled here as well as our proximity to the U.S. Capitol, the White House and the Supreme Court. In addition, increasing incidents of violence in courthouses throughout the country has made the enhancement of courthouse security a top priority. A survey by the American Bar Association found that 60% of judges have been threatened, and the U.S. Marshals Service has reported an increase in threats against judicial officers at the District of Columbia Courts. Further compounding the security risks at the D.C. Courts' complex are the shortage of Deputy U.S. Marshals to provide protection in the courtroom and the number of volatile incidents that occur, particularly in Family Court and Domestic Violence courtrooms. Across the nation judges and members of the public are most often injured or killed in court proceedings for these types of matters.

The District of Columbia Courts operate one of the busiest courthouse complexes in the country. On a daily basis, approximately 10,000 persons visit the D.C. Courts, and between 250 and 550 prisoners are transported to the Moultrie Courthouse. With progress being made on the Master Plan for the D.C. Courts Facilities, court proceedings are now occurring in all court buildings, including the Historic Courthouse, Building A, Building B, Building C, and the Moultrie Courthouse.

The rising security incidents in courthouses throughout the country, coupled with the location of the District of Columbia Courts in the Nation's Capital, provided the impetus for a long overdue review of security at the D.C. Courts. The resulting studies conducted by the U.S. Marshals Service identified a number of deficiencies and significant risks. Furthermore, a preliminary security risk assessment, recently conducted by the Courts' new Security Operations Chief, highlighted additional security risks. The security assessments have illuminated the need for different types of security equipment. Identified security enhancements include optical turnstile barriers to control access to the Moultrie Courthouse and Buildings A, B, and C.

Inadequate mail screening is one of the identified security risks currently facing the Courts. Best practices require a separate screening facility for all mail and packages in order to contain biohazards, contaminants, and explosives. Current facilities are not capable of protecting judges, staff, and the public, as the existing mail room, which handles approximately 1.8 million pieces of incoming mail each year, is located deep inside the Moultrie Courthouse. Mail screening is

currently conducted at the public courthouse entrances where 10,000 people enter daily. There is no way to isolate hazardous packages and contain security risks.

While the Courts have made significant security enhancements over the past few years, additional resources are essential to ensure that the public, judicial officers, and court staff are safe and secure. Two mail clerks are required to undertake the hazardous duty of security screening of court mail. The Capital Budget section of this submission includes a request for a separate facility to screen court mail.

Relationship to the Courts' vision, mission, and goals. The enhancement of courthouse security supports the Courts' Goal 5.1 to provide a safe and secure environment for the administration of justice and ensure continuity of operations in the event of an emergency or disaster. A secure environment is essential to the Courts' mission of protecting rights and liberties and upholding the law.

Proposed Solution. The Courts plan to hire two mail clerks to conduct screening of court mail and purchase equipment to address the identified security risks.

Expenditure Plan. The recruitment and selection process will be conducted in accordance with the D.C. Courts' personnel policies. The Mail Screeners will be employed in the Courts' Administrative Services Division, which is responsible for incoming mail. The equipment will be procured in accordance with the Courts' Procurement Policies and Guidelines.

Performance Indicators. Performance indicators would include a reduction in incident reports, delivery of safe mail throughout the Courts' facilities, and compliance with federal courthouse security standards. Ultimately, however, in the area of security the best measure of performance is the avoidance of harm to individuals and facilities. Since the precise level and nature of the risk cannot be known it is difficult, at best, to prove the efficacy of any security enhancements. The approach taken here is to identify known risks and gaps in existing security and to address them proactively.