



# NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

February 2, 2012

The Honorable Al Franken  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boozman  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Franken and Senate Boozman:

On behalf of the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) and the 3,079 elected sheriffs nationwide, I am writing to express our strong support for the Local Courthouse Safety Act of 2012.

As you are aware, sheriffs are typically responsible for the safety and security of the local courthouses in their counties – along with performing traditional law enforcement duties and operating the local jails. Sadly, in recent years, there has been a spike in violent incidents in courthouses across the country. This violence places law enforcement, judicial personnel, and the general public in harm's way. As such, it is imperative that sheriffs have the resources, particularly in rural areas where resources are extremely limited, to ensure courthouses have the appropriate equipment and tools necessary to improve security, enabling for the protection of courthouses throughout the United States.

The Local Courthouse Safety Act of 2012 would allow states to use existing grant funding allocated under the Byrne Justice Assistance Grants Program (Byrne JAG) and State Homeland Security Grants Program (SHSGP) to improve local courthouse security. Additionally, the legislation would give local courts access to excess federal security equipment, such as metal detectors, wands, and baggage screening machines, similar to the program at the Defense Department which gives excess equipment to first responders. Finally, the legislation would formally authorize the VALOR (Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability) Initiative of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). Established in 2010, the VALOR Initiative provides training to law enforcement in techniques for avoiding, responding, and surviving violent encounters.

The safety and security of our local courthouses is a top priority for the nation's sheriffs. The National Sheriffs' Association applauds and strongly supports the introduction of the Local Courthouse Safety Act of 2012, and looks forward to working with you to pass this critical legislation during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul H. Fitzgerald".

Sheriff Paul H. Fitzgerald  
President