



## News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge  
19th Judicial Circuit  
Lake County  
Waukegan, Illinois 60085-4359

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Waukegan, Illinois

### RECENT THREATS MADE AGAINST JUDICIAL PERSONNEL

Over the last several days, a judge in the Nineteenth Circuit Court received significant threats and harassment, which are being addressed in coordination with law enforcement. These threats appear to stem from an inaccurate press release issued over the weekend (subsequently corrected) by a federal law enforcement agency, erroneous reporting by several media outlets covering the underlying criminal case, and social media posts containing a wide array of incorrect statements.

Disinformation undermines our Republic. Threats of violence and intimidation against judges weaken our democracy. Knowing what happens in court and understanding the law are essential to public trust.

In April 2025, a Waukegan resident was arrested following a criminal investigation into the death of an Antioch woman found at his home, charged by the Lake County State's Attorney's Office with several offenses, and brought before a Lake County judge as required by law.

Illinois law known as the "SAFE-T Act" forbids the court from holding an individual charged with the offenses against this defendant in jail prior to trial.

The 2021 passage of the SAFE-T Act ended the use of cash bail in Illinois, creating the most restrictive procedure in the nation for determining whether a person charged with a crime can be detained in jail before trial.

The SAFE-T Act stripped judges in Illinois of the authority to make unilateral detention decisions. Instead, the Act requires that all criminal defendants be released prior to trial unless (1) the State's Attorney's office charges the defendant with certain detainable offenses specified by the statute and (2) the State's Attorney's office files a petition seeking to detain that defendant. Only when both of these occur does the Act permit the judge to hold a defendant in jail.

When the State's Attorney's office does not charge the defendant with a detainable offense or does not file a petition to detain, the SAFE-T Act prohibits a court from detaining a defendant prior to trial. In the case in which the judge is now receiving threats, the criminal offenses with which the defendant was charged are excluded from the list of crimes eligible for detention under the SAFE-T Act. The State's Attorney's Office did not file a petition seeking the defendant to be detained in jail. This law prohibits Illinois judges from independently initiating detention proceedings regardless of the case or circumstances before them.

As the Illinois Judges Association explained in its December 2024 public statement, "Judges must make detention decisions within the framework of the law." The SAFE-T Act required the judge to release the defendant until trial.

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