

CHIEF JUSTICE MYRON T. STEELE
REMARKS TO NEW CASTLE COUNTY COURTHOUSE STAFF
February 13, 2013

February 11, 2013 was perhaps one of the most difficult days in the history of the Delaware Judiciary. That is true for me as a member of the Judiciary and certainly in my tenure as Chief Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court. The events that transpired in the New Castle County Courthouse on the morning of the 11th were nothing short of tragic. I, along with my colleagues, extend our sincerest thoughts and prayers to the victims of this devastating event. In the wake of this violence, we are left with many questions which will undoubtedly be debated across the government offices of this State, and beyond. However, my immediate thoughts and focus are on the safety and security of our Delaware Courts, both for the public that access our justice system and the employees who work within it to provide access to justice for all.

The details of this event are being reviewed to learn what, if anything, we can do better in the future. That said, I speak to you today, so very proud of the Capitol Police officers and others who protect us. I believe that the quick actions of the Capitol Police officers on Monday saved many lives and demonstrated their amazing courage and heroism. They kept what was a very tragic event from being catastrophic. I am grateful that Capitol Police officers and other security staff regularly conduct security maneuvers (including active shooter training) at the New Castle County Courthouse. This situational preparedness, combined with the unwavering courage demonstrated by the officers who held their ground to protect Delaware citizens, is remarkable. We cannot adequately express our gratitude to these men and women who accept the daily challenge to protect our citizens, employees and judicial officers alike. We are aware that the Capitol Police has struggled for many years to meet overwhelming workload demands and growing security risks at our courthouses with very limited resources. Their actions on Monday demonstrated the critical nature of their work and the importance of providing them with adequate resources. Looking at FY 2014 and beyond, we strongly support requests from the Capitol Police for resources to augment the services they provide the Courts and others.

As for our employees in the Judicial Branch, I have recognized over the years, and continue to be impressed by, and grateful for, their amazing ability to meet the challenges placed before them. I have often spoken of their efforts and resilience against adversity in addressing the growing needs of our citizens while facing dwindling resources. I have never been as proud of them and their resolve as I am today. The professionalism displayed by our staff during Monday's tragic event, the calm execution of the evacuation order, and their patience in the hours after the event waiting for the "all clear" sign so that they could return home to loved ones, was awe-inspiring. Their willingness to come back into this courthouse today to perform their important work is nothing short of heroic in its own right. I know that there will be personal challenges ahead for each employee as they deal with this event in their own way and encourage

each of you to take advantage of any available assistance that will be helpful. If there is something else that is needed that we are not providing, please let us know.

We know that there are challenging times ahead – the difficulty of balancing the goals of security and access to justice is all too real, given Monday’s tragedy. I pray that none of us ever witness another day in our judicial branch like Monday. Looking forward, we will continue our efforts to balance security and access to justice. We will look thoughtfully at the lessons we take away from this tragedy and apply them to our mission. Today, however, is the time to express our heartfelt gratitude for the men and women who tirelessly work to provide justice for all Delaware citizens, including those who serve to protect us.