

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 12, 2023

The Honorable Roslynn R. Mauskopf
Director
Administrative Office of the United States Courts
Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building
One Columbus Circle, NE, Suite 7-110
Washington, DC 20544

Dear Director Mauskopf:

We request your urgent attention to the longstanding condition and security deficiencies of the Walter E. Hoffman U.S. Courthouse located in Norfolk, Virginia.

The Hoffman Courthouse, a historic Art Deco-style building, was constructed between 1932 and 1934 to house the U.S. Post Office, the U.S. District Court, and other federal agencies in Norfolk. Since its construction, the courthouse has contributed to the architectural and historic character of metropolitan Norfolk and remains a symbol of the federal government's presence in the area. In 1984, the building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2002, Congress appropriated \$11.6 million toward the construction of a courthouse annex,¹ the land for which was acquired in 2011. However, despite the Court's sustained efforts throughout the last decade, there has been no meaningful progress since 2011 to develop and construct the annex, while the purchased land remains vacant and unoccupied. Norfolk has remained on Part II of the Judiciary's Courthouse Project Priorities (CPP) list for many years, with the Court and the Norfolk community watching and waiting, as other courthouse construction projects are annually given preference. For over two decades, the Court has had no choice but to rely on a facility with significant and long-recognized concerns.

In an effort to make some progress, the Court worked diligently with your staff and the U.S. Marshals Service from 2019 through 2021 to identify notable vulnerabilities that, while not a complete solution, would improve the security shortfalls of the Hoffman Courthouse. Accordingly, seven security-related construction projects were identified:

1. Relocation of entry and construction of ballistic protected screening location, and relocation of the District Clerk from the 1st floor project area to the 3rd floor;
2. Modification of existing corridors to exclude the public from some hallways used by prisoners, judges, and staff to ensure efficient and safe circulation of visitors and staff;

¹ Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-67, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-107publ67/html/PLAW-107publ67.htm>.

3. Construction of a judges' parking garage to provide judges with protected entry and exit of the courthouse complex;
4. Construction of a U.S. Marshals Service sallyport to provide law enforcement officers with the safest and direct access to the Court;
5. Construction of an elevator reserved solely for judges and court staff to ensure judges can travel safely from offices to courtrooms;
6. Construction of a concrete delivery ramp; and
7. Procurement of a secondary emergency generator to allow court services to continue during extreme weather events and emergencies.

Unfortunately, Norfolk's listing on the CPP appears to limit the Eastern District of Virginia's access to already appropriated sources that could fund all the identified requirements. Furthermore, while prior communications between the Court and the Administrative Office indicated available funding in fiscal year 2023 for two of the seven projects (numbers 1 and 2 above), that current-year funding now appears uncertain. Notwithstanding funding and timeline questions over the remaining five security projects, we are concerned that even the partial measure of funding the initial two projects does not appear to be a priority for the Administrative Office. Moreover, we are troubled by the enduring condition and security issues of the Hoffman Courthouse, without any clear path to complete the courthouse annex on already-purchased land in Norfolk.

We request that the two planned security projects for the Hoffman Courthouse be prioritized in the Federal Judiciary's fiscal year 2023 budget and not be further delayed to a later year. Additionally, we request an update and estimated timeline to fund all of the identified security projects. Finally, we ask for information by February 1, 2023, on the Judiciary's plans to develop the unoccupied land intended for the courthouse annex, along with any action the Court should take to improve Norfolk's standing on the CPP. We believe these projects are necessary to provide a safe and secure judicial presence in the Norfolk area, now and for many years to come.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to timely improve safety and security at the Walter E. Hoffman U.S. Courthouse and review and consider all options to finally fund the courthouse annex.

Sincerely,



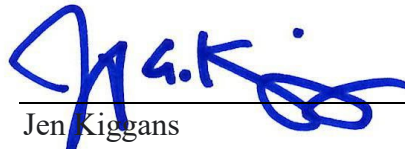
Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator



Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senator



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Jen Kiggans
Member of Congress

CC: Judiciary Conference Committee on Space and Facilities
Administrator Robin Carnahan
The Honorable Ronald L. Davis