

Opposition Testimony to HB 272-House Government Oversight Committee
Submitted by Stephen P. Calardo
October 31, 2023

I am an attorney and former assistant prosecuting attorney in Hamilton County. I am a gun owner who possesses a hunting license.

1. HB 272 would create a nonsensical exception allowing the concealed carry of firearms into government buildings where courtrooms are located, at a time that court *is not in session*—a distinction that will make no difference to courtroom personnel, government employees and courthouse visitors who would be exposed to greater risk of becoming victims of gun violence.
2. Courts are often required to quickly move into unplanned, unscheduled court sessions to address both criminal and civil matters.
3. Angry shooters intent on misguided revenge will find it just as easy to shoot a judge, prosecutor, or court clerk in their office when court is not in session as in a courtroom *that is in session*.
4. Courthouses and other government buildings with or without courtrooms are generally teaming with law enforcement and security. Why do we need barely trained citizens carrying concealed firearms in such buildings?
5. Courthouses and government buildings are essential institutions for maintaining law and order. Allowing concealed firearms in these environments introduces a significant risk of disrupting the security and peaceful functioning of these establishments.
6. Courthouses and government buildings already have established security protocols and personnel to ensure the safety of all individuals on the premises. The introduction of concealed firearms can create confusion and uncertainty regarding the roles and responsibilities of security personnel. It may also lead to a situation where individuals, including law enforcement officers, struggle to distinguish between those authorized to carry concealed firearms and potential threats, which can inadvertently escalate conflicts.
7. Judges had better have all security personnel on *speed dial* to make certain to instantly alert them that he or she is stepping out of the judicial office to preside over an unplanned court hearing and will be *in session*. Moreover, the sudden denial of allowing concealed carry into the premises will do nothing to disarm those who have already entered. The early entry shooter can easily evade normal security protocol by entry while the court is not in session and seat himself in a courtroom once it begins its session. This is dangerous nonsense.
8. Consider the recent murders and shootings of judges, family members of a judge, prosecutors, and other government officials. These instances of violence include shooters who were lawyers, litigants, and a divorced spouse unhappy with a judge's custody decision, who could have qualified for an Ohio concealed carry permit. Adverse actions in life-changing court decisions sometimes push susceptible individuals over the edge to commit what would be unthinkable acts of gun violence, surprising even to those who are acquainted with the shooter. If such individuals already possess a concealed carry license, or plot to obtain one to carry out a plan of murderous revenge, HB 272 will provide a pathway for execution of their plan.

9. A tragic real-world example demonstrates why even those with concealed carry permits should not be permitted to carry concealed firearms into mixed use government/courtroom buildings whether court is in session or not. The Virginia Beach Municipal Center is just such a mixed-use government/courtroom building.

On May 31, 2019, concealed handgun permit holder DeWayne Craddock, 40, shot and killed 12 people and wounded five others at the Virginia Beach Municipal Center before being shot and killed by police. Craddock was an employee of the city's public utilities department and according to the FBI, "[W]as motivated by perceived workplace grievances, which he fixated on for years." The FBI found that Craddock's perceived grievances dated back to 2014 and, "Violence was viewed by the shooter as a way to reconcile this conflict and restore his perverted view of justice." In 2017, Craddock finalized a divorce from his wife and began having performance issues at work. According to a report by the Virginia Beach Police Department, "The suspect's ex-wife observed that the suspect exhibited signs of paranoia and relayed that he believed others were talking about him." Craddock legally purchased six firearms from 2006 to 2019 and also obtained a concealed carry permit and license for a firearm silencer. *May 31, 2019 Final Investigation Summary Report,* Virginia Beach Police Department, March 2021.

10. Any consideration of whether the court is "in session" as being the *only* time weapons should be prohibited in mixed use government/courtroom buildings is nonsensical. Under HB 272, an Ohio concealed carry permit holder—*someone just like concealed carry licensee DeWayne Craddock*--who is unstable and intent upon shooting Ohio government employees, judges, prosecutors, court personnel, witnesses, or litigants could simply and legally walk through security (with his concealed carry permit) into such government office building while court is "not in session" and *then* execute his murderous plan against victims of his choosing, including those in a courtroom that later comes "into session" after the shooter has legally entered.