

Ziegler vows to continue pushing to improve security for those who work in court system

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Conservative Chief Justice Annette Ziegler said she'll continue pushing to improve security for those who work in the courts, after the Legislature rejected her request for a "branch of law enforcement."

Ziegler in her third State of the Judiciary address Wednesday said she's focused on improving security for the Supreme Court and lower courts, which she says involves giving more executive powers to the judicial branch. She has proposed an independent judicial branch of law enforcement.

She also bemoaned the Legislature's denial of security upgrades in the most recent budget cycle. She also said she's still working out the details of an agreement with the Capitol Police, adding it "looks promising."

She recalled the murder of retired Juneau County Judge John Roemer last year before mentioning the fatal shooting last month of Maryland Circuit Court Judge Andrew Wilkinson.

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"While we ultimately did prevail on the cybersecurity funding for CCAP, unfortunately, even when the need is so obvious, we hit a roadblock when it came to establishing an independent judicial branch of law enforcement," Ziegler said. "Bottom line, the Legislature was not willing to fund a new agency or create one, but I didn't stop."

She said the Joint Finance Committee approved cybersecurity upgrades, but did not approve other requests.

Ziegler's speech was her first since the court flipped to a 4-3 liberal majority in August and the several public spats with colleagues that followed. She didn't focus on those issues during the speech, only noting "while there have been some significant challenges, I'll continue to do my best going forward and focus on court system priorities."

Ziegler earlier this year ripped her liberal colleagues for firing former Director of State Courts Randy Koschnick. During today's speech, she didn't mention her belief that Interim Director of State Courts Audrey Skwierawski, who also briefly spoke Wednesday, was illegally appointed to the post.

Ziegler praised Koschnick for his work addressing a shortage of court reporters across the state by implementing a digital audio recording system, among other things.

"Taking the record is our lifeline," she said of court reporting. "And then-Director Koschnick was instrumental to this and the success of many other court improvements."

See Ziegler's prepared remarks [here](#).
Watch the speech [here](#).