HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3356 FILED ON: 1/18/2013

HOUSE . . . . . No. 1269

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Thomas P. Conroy

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to enhance safety and security in courthouses.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Thomas P. Conroy	*13th Middlesex*

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HOUSE . . . . . No. 1269

By Mr. Conroy of Wayland, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1269) of Thomas P. Conroy for legislation to enhance safety and security in courthouses. The Judiciary.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *2238* OF 2011-2012.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Thirteen

An Act to enhance safety and security in courthouses.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Section 1: Chapter 265 of the General Laws, is hereby amended by inserting after section 13D the following section:

Section 13D1/4. Section 13D1/4. Whoever commits an assault or an assault and battery in or on the property owned, leased or occupied by the Massachusetts judicial department or an agency or committee thereof, including any trial or appellate court, during the time when the courts are in session or open to the public may be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for not more than three years or by imprisonment in a jail or house of correction for not more than two and one-half years, or by a fine of not more than $25,000 or by both such fine and imprisonment.

Section 2: Section 13C of chapter 268 of the General Laws, added by St. 1971, c. 524, is hereby amended by striking our the first sentence and inserting in its place the following:--

Whoever causes or actively participates in the willful disruption of proceedings of any court of the commonwealth may be punished by imprisonment in a jail or house of correction for not more than two and one half years or in state prison for not more than three years, or by a fine of not more than five thousand dollars, or by both such fine and imprisonment. Nothing in this section shall interfere with or prevent the exercise by any court of the commonwealth of its power of contempt.

Section 3: Section 4 of chapter 275 of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in its place the following:--

If the person complained of is convicted, he may be punished by a fine of not more than one hundred dollars or by imprisonment for not more than six months, provided that any threat to cause bodily injury to a person on account of the person's performance of official duties as a judge, employee of the judicial department, including but not limited to clerk magistrates, probation officers, interpreters, stenographers, and court officers, prosecutors and attorneys may be punished by imprisonment in a jail or house of correction for not more than two and one half years or in state prison for not more than three years, or by a fine of not more than five thousand dollars, or by both such fine and imprisonment. Nothing in this section shall interfere with or prevent the exercise by any court of the commonwealth of its power of contempt.

Explanatory Note. This proposal would make three changes in the current law to deter persons from criminal conduct in court houses and against person engaged in the performance of official duties in the courts, including court staff, jurors, prosecutors and attorneys, in order to insure that those who work in the court system or come to our courts as jurors, witnesses, parties or attorneys seeking justice or performing acts relating to the administration of justice will be safe and secure.

Section one makes certain assaults and assault and battery offenses which are committed on court property while courts are in session or open to the public felony offenses. Section two increases the potential penalty for willful disruption of court proceedings from a one year misdemeanor to a felony punishable by up to three years in state prison. Section three establishes an enhanced penalty for certain threats to do bodily harm to court staff as well as to jurors, prosecutors and attorneys, due to their performance of official duties, to a felony punishable by up to three years in state prison.

This proposal does not establish any mandatory minimum sentences, does not restrict the discretion of prosecutors, and has no fiscal impact.