

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 15, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to respectfully request that the construction of an annex and renovations of the historic James M. Ashley and Thomas W. L. Ashley United States Courthouse in Toledo, Ohio be included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 budget request and remain the top priority of the Federal Judiciary, as reflected in the Federal Judiciary Courthouse Project Priorities. The current courthouse building lacks sufficient security and space for the district it serves. The Courthouse, originally built in 1932 to house one federal judge, serves twenty-one counties and houses seven federal judges in the Northern District of Ohio.

While we understand the current budget restraints, the James M. Ashley and Thomas W. L. Ashley United States Courthouse is severely outdated in its current condition and does not meet minimal security standards. The security deficits jeopardize the safety of the public, employees, jurors and judges in the courthouse. The courthouse currently utilizes public corridors, stairwells and elevators, which require the aforementioned parties to share the same entry and exit points. Also, the building does not meet life-safety system requirements such as fire rated stairwells, an adequate fire-suppression system, and elevators large enough to accommodate a standard ambulance gurney. Additionally, the parking lot entrance used by judges, federal prosecutors and staff is also utilized by the U.S. Marshall Service to transport prisoners into and out of the courthouse.

Other issues include the building's lack of adequate space for the district court and the bankruptcy courts. All available space, including the attic and basement, has been converted into office space to help accommodate shortage. Additionally, the largest courtroom in the building is 600 square feet smaller than the recommended size for a district judge according to the U.S. Court's Design Guide. The other courtrooms are too small to properly accommodate jurors, lawyers and the public leading to multiple security concerns. Due to the inadequate space, the U.S. Pretrial and Probation Office has been moved to a leased space off-site, affecting the District Court's ability to properly communicate with that office.

These issues demonstrate the reasons behind the Federal Judiciary determination that the James M. Ashley and Thomas W. L. Ashley United States Courthouse in Toledo, Ohio is a high priority to be addressed. The Judiciary and the General Services Administration have developed a cost effective strategy that addresses the court's needs to update the security and working space while preserving the existing, historic courthouse.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter. We look forward to working with you and your administration to ensure the needs of the Northern District Court of Ohio, Western Division, are met.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherrod Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rob Portman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Rob Portman
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert E. Latta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marcy Kaptur". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress