

CHICAGO TEAMSTERS JOINT COUNCIL 25



NEWS»

COURT SERVICE DEPUTIES ATTACKED, TOLD NOT TO FILE CHARGES

Attacks Highlight Understaffing of Cook County Courts System

Supervisors at the Cook County Criminal Courts Building told two court service deputies represented by Teamsters Local 700 they were not to file charges after being attacked on April 27.

The deputies were taken to an area hospital for soft-tissue damage after being assaulted by three relatives of Miguel Flores, who was killed in a 2007 crash involving a Chicago police officer. On Tuesday, the grieving Flores family lashed out at the deputies after a Cook County judge ruled the implicated officer was arrested without probable cause following the accident.

Though other officers were able to eventually respond to the attack inside the courthouse, the deputies received deep bruises, significant scratches, swelling and other injuries after being repeatedly struck by members of the Flores family. It was while at the hospital undergoing X-rays that Chief Deputies Kelly Jackson and Don Milazzo informed the union officers that their attackers would be released without charges.

“County officials are sweeping this assault under the rug either out of sympathy for those who waged it or because they’re fully aware that too few deputies are serving our courts,” said William P. Logan, Local 700 Assistant Trustee. “Sadly, officials once again are continuing to put politics ahead of the principle of law in Chicago.”

In December 2009, Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart proposed a plan to close four suburban county courtrooms on the weekends to better use available deputies. According to the sheriff’s office, there are entire floors of some Cook County courtrooms that have one deputy assigned to them. On Saturday and Sunday alone, the bond courts of the Criminal Courts Building at 26th Street and California Avenue routinely see more than 100 defendants.

“There are more than 350 courtrooms in Cook County and officials know there are simply not enough deputies to assign to all areas,” said Becky Strzechowski, Local 700 Assistant Trustee. “Unless the county recognizes the danger it is putting its workers and citizens in every day, more officers will be injured in our courts and more officials will try to cover up their inaction.”

Teamsters Local 700, an affiliate of Teamsters Joint Council 25, represents more than 13,000 public employees throughout Chicago and Illinois.