

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

HEALTH CARE, BENEFITS, AND
ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-1501

November 28, 2017

The Honorable Michael A. Hughes
U.S. Marshal
District of Columbia Superior Court
H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse
500 Indiana Ave. NW Room C-250
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Marshal Hughes:

On November 3, 2017, I wrote to you regarding your office's policies and procedures for protecting sensitive personal information during evictions, after media reports that tax documents were left on a curb in the District of Columbia during the eviction of a tax company. After that letter received media attention, a D.C. family informed me of their disturbing experience during an eviction executed by your office. Among other things, the family alleged that U.S. Marshals entered their home with their guns drawn and were verbally abusive. The family has filed a claim with the U.S. Marshals Service for personal injuries and property damage, so I am appropriately precluded from commenting on the merits of the matter, and, in any case, there has been no official response from the Marshals Service to my constituent's claim.

However, because your office has local responsibilities for evictions in the District, it is essential that D.C. residents be made aware of your office's eviction policies and procedures. As you know, the eviction process in the District is emblematic of the unique, hybrid federal-local criminal justice system here. The D.C. Council, which consists of locally elected officials, passes the landlord-tenant laws. The Superior Court, whose judges are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, issues eviction orders under the laws passed by the Council. The U.S. Marshal for the Superior Court, who is also appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, executes the Superior Court's eviction orders. In other jurisdictions, all of these steps would be undertaken by local officials.

I would also ask you to respond in writing to the following matters within the next thirty days:

- (1) In general, U.S. Marshals do not execute residential evictions. However, your office executes them almost daily. What type of eviction training do your officers receive?
- (2) Does the Marshals Service in general and your office in particular have written eviction policies and procedures? If there are written policies and procedures, are any public and readily available?

MAIN DISTRICT OFFICE

90 K STREET, N.E. SUITE 100
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(202) 408-9041
(202) 408-9048 (FAX)

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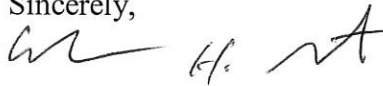
SOUTHEAST DISTRICT OFFICE

2235 SHANNON PLACE, S.E. SUITE 2032
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20020-7026
(202) 678-8900
(202) 678-8844 (FAX)

- (3) I understand that your office provides written notice to tenants informing them it will execute an eviction in the near future. Does that notice describe the eviction process and/or the rights and responsibilities of tenants during an eviction?
- (4) It appears that no individual district offices within the Marshals Service have websites. This lack of transparency and access is particularly problematic for your office, given your office's unique functions within the Marshals Service. I urge you to create a website so that D.C. residents and elected officials can easily contact your office, learn about the office's work, including the eviction process, and file complaints if necessary.
- (5) How does your office investigate complaints from the public of inappropriate conduct during evictions? Are the results of the investigations made public, or at least to the complainant?

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Norton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eleanor Holmes Norton

Cc: The Honorable Robert E. Morin, Chief Judge, District of Columbia Superior Court