

6-2024

## Understanding Threats to Public Officials

Peter Simi  
*Chapman University*

Christopher Bader  
*Chapman University*

Seamus Hughes  
*University of Nebraska at Omaha, seamushughes@unomaha.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch>

Please take our feedback survey at: [https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE](https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE)

---

### Recommended Citation

Simi, Peter; Bader, Christopher; and Hughes, Seamus, "Understanding Threats to Public Officials" (2024).  
*Reports, Projects, and Research*. 73.  
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch/73>

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education (NCITE) at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reports, Projects, and Research by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).

# Understanding Threats to Public Officials

Pete Simi, Ph.D., Chapman University  
Christopher Bader, Ph.D., Chapman University  
Seamus Hughes, Senior Faculty, University of Nebraska at Omaha

**Threats against public officials are on the rise. It's a disturbing trend that NCITE researchers at Chapman University are charting by tracking federal cases involving threats against officials working in the criminal justice system, elections, politics, health care, and education.**

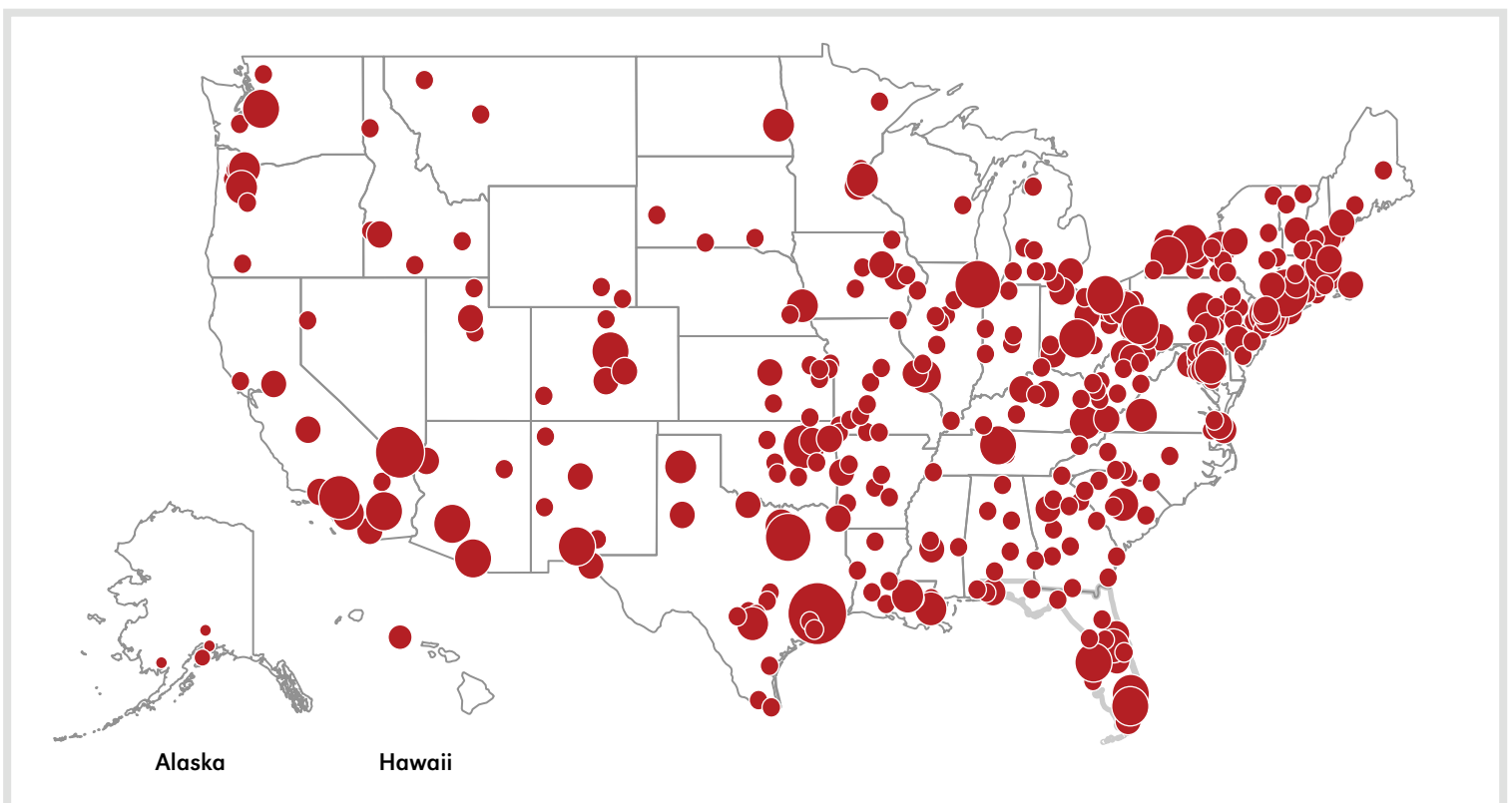
## THREAT CASES BY STATE, 2013-2022

Between 2013 and 2016 there were an average of 38 federal charges involving threats against public officials per year. **That number nearly doubled to an average of 62 charges per year between 2017-2022.**

The number of threats to public officials has continued to rise each year with **the largest volume against law enforcement/military (43%) and elected/election officials (41%).**

To illustrate the magnitude and breadth of threats against public officials, each dot represents a legal case in which one or more individuals were charged with threatening a public official. Each legal case may involve one or more threats and one or more charges. The scale of the dot on the map represents the number of cases.

**Threats to public officials were geographically dispersed across all 50 states.**

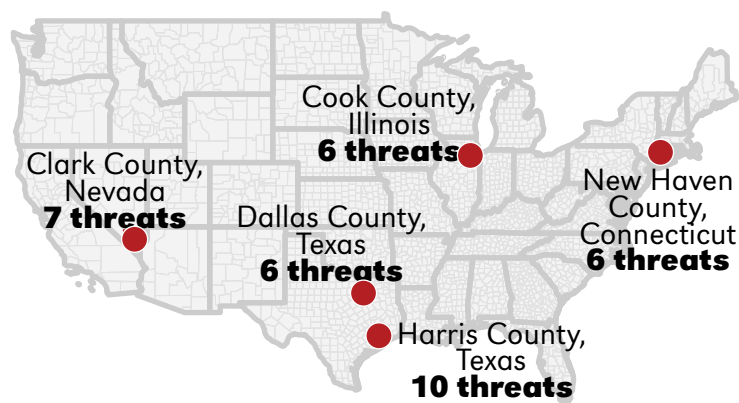


**NCITE**  
A DHS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

**CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY**  
An NCITE Consortium Research Partner

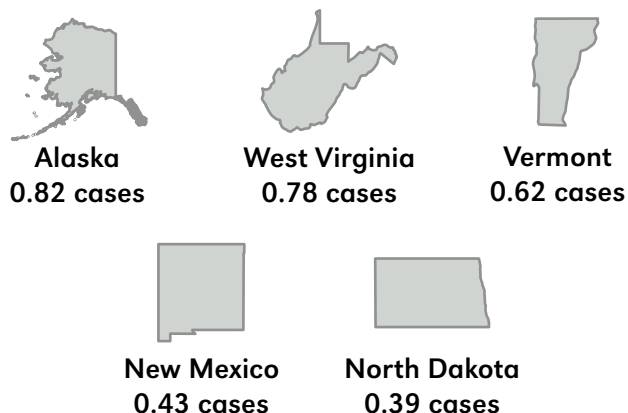
# HIGHEST THREAT LOCATIONS IN THE U.S., 2013-2022

## TOP 5 COUNTIES FOR THREATS



The above map presents the number of cases involving threats against public officials originating from each county.

## TOP 5 STATES FOR THREATS PER CAPITA



For each state we present the number of cases involving threats against public officials per 100,000 residents.

## METHODOLOGY

Relying on federal charges and court documents, we constructed a dataset of communicated threats against U.S. public officials (election/elected, education, health care, and law enforcement/military) from 2013 to 2022. Researchers focused on communications that included threats of bodily harm or death and resulted in federal charges. The dataset includes more than 500 cases and highlights the method of threat communication, type of public official targeted, criminal and mental health histories, and nature of the grievance, among other factors.

The maps represent the location from which the threat originated, not the location of the target. For example, a case originating in Houston may involve a person who lives in Houston accused of threatening a public official that lives in Washington, D.C. It is possible that multiple cases from an area involve the same individual charged with threatening public officials in separate cases.

The data collection and analyses are ongoing with a current focus on 2023 and 2024.

**For more information on this research, visit us at**

<https://www.unomaha.edu/ncite/research/research-projects/simi-public-official-threats.php>

## PRINCIPAL RESEARCHERS

Pete Simi, Ph.D., Chapman University  
Christopher Bader, Ph.D., Chapman University  
Seamus Hughes, Senior Research Faculty,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

## RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Hailey Bunsold, Chapman University  
Sophie Camileri, Chapman University  
Camden Carmichael, University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Taylor Hakimi, Chapman University  
Marisa Quezada, Chapman University  
Kesa White, NCITE Consultant

