



NEWS ADVISORY

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Joseph A. Zayas
Chief Administrative Judge**

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Pilot Digital Courtroom to Be Unveiled at Staten Island Courthouse

STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK—Richmond County Supreme Court Administrative Judge Raymond L. Rodriguez, joined by New York State court system leaders and Richmond County elected officials, will unveil the newly completed Digital Jury Trial Courtroom (Room 410) at the **26 Central Avenue courthouse in Staten Island on Wednesday, September 10 at 1:00pm**, part of a unique partnership with local elected officials to modernize courtrooms throughout Richmond County. The new courtroom features enhanced A/V equipment and design, including upgraded cameras, a two-channel wireless mic system, a portable podium, touch screen monitors, a dedicated evidence annotation tool and more, all to ensure improved evidence presentation, mobility, and interactive capabilities for courtroom participants. The space reflects the vision of the court system's Court Modernization Action Committee, an advisory group on which Judge Rodriguez presently sits that was established post-COVID to remove barriers to justice. The event will include a video presentation by UCS Division of Court Modernization Director Sheng Guo.

"With the unveiling of these new digital courtrooms, we move beyond outdated systems and step boldly into a future where justice is more accessible, efficient, and inclusive," said Judge Rodriguez. "This transformation wouldn't be possible without the unwavering commitment of our collaborative partners, whose vision and dedication helped turn aspiration into action."

The 26 Central Avenue courthouse opened in 2015, with its criminal courtrooms designed to include evidence presentation systems. Additional videoconferencing equipment and video distribution devices were installed at the height of the pandemic to support virtual court proceedings in compliance with social distancing requirements. Thus, multiple generations of technology have been deployed in these courtrooms over the years, creating usability, compatibility, and related issues. Recognizing these problems and working with OCA's Division of Court Modernization, Judge Rodriguez has prioritized the Richmond County Courts' modernization efforts, all with a focus on fair, prompt case resolution that enables the full, effective participation of all stakeholders in the justice process.

Concurrently, acoustic enhancements have been implemented in Courtrooms 209 and 210 at the historic Richmond Terrace courthouse, with the installation of acoustic panels significantly improving sound clarity while exemplifying the court system's commitment to creating accessible, functional spaces that retain the architectural integrity of the historic buildings that house many courtrooms across the State.

Building on the success of the Courtroom #410 pilot, and supported by funding from Richmond County elected officials, all courtrooms in Richmond County Supreme Court, Criminal Court, and Civil Court will benefit from modernization upgrades, with District Attorney Michael McMahon and Borough President Vito Fossella contributing a combined \$650,000 to modernize 12 courtrooms at 26 Central Avenue and the grand jury room at 130 Stuyvesant Place; State Senator Jessica Scarcella-Spanton's office providing \$50,000 to modernize Richmond County Civil Court's (927 Castleton Avenue) main courtroom; New York City Council Member Kamillah Hanks' office contributing \$400,000 to modernize two Supreme Court courtrooms at 18 Richmond Terrace, another Supreme Court courtroom at Borough Hall, and three courtrooms at Civil Court; and New York State Assembly Member Charles Fall's office contributing \$150,000 to modernize five Family Court courtrooms at 18 Richmond Terrace.

"Simply put, Staten Islanders deserve a state-of-the-art, 21st century criminal justice system equipped with modern courtrooms and the latest technology that will enhance not only efficiency but justice as well. For too long, outdated systems and infrastructure have hampered our borough's courthouses but now, thanks to a nearly \$700,000 investment from my office and Borough President Vito Fossella, the 26 Central Avenue courthouse will receive significant modernization enhancements, in addition to a host of other improvements," said District Attorney McMahon. "The women and men of my office work every day to ensure lawbreakers are held accountable and victims receive justice in the courtroom, with this partnership going a long way to improve public safety on Staten Island. I commend Judge Rodriguez and Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas for their steadfast leadership and want to thank our borough's elected officials for their continued commitment to improve safety and fairness in our beloved borough. I look forward to seeing all that these technological upgrades will do for those who work in and interact with our criminal justice system."

"Many of our courtrooms are outdated and require a facelift. They have needed work for quite some time, and we are happy to help. Not only are we enhancing the look of the courtrooms, but also upgrading and modernizing the technology to help streamline the system of justice. Staten Island residents deserve the best, and we are trying to give them what they deserve. We are also pleased to collaborate with District Attorney McMahon, Senator Scarcella-Spanton, and Councilmember Hanks to make this project possible," said Borough President Fossella.

"It was a privilege to collaborate with my Staten Island colleagues to assure funding for these important technological renovations. This project will ensure accessibility to, and efficiency and inclusivity within, our courtrooms on Staten Island," said Senator Scarcella-Spanton.

"I am proud to have secured \$400,000 funding to support the modernization of our Staten Island courts. For too long, Staten Island's courtrooms have operated with outdated systems that made it harder for justice to be delivered fairly and efficiently. This long-overdue investment will finally bring our borough's courtrooms into the 21st century. with the technology and resources Staten Islanders deserve," said Council Member Hanks. "I am grateful to work alongside my colleagues in government to make this modernization possible and commend Judge Rodriguez for his leadership in ensuring that justice on Staten Island is both accessible and equitable."

"I'm proud to have secured \$150,000 to significantly upgrade courtroom technology across Staten Island. These improvements—including enhanced audiovisual systems—will elevate the courtroom experience for both the public and those who serve within it. I'm honored to work alongside Judge Rodriguez, whose leadership has been instrumental, and deeply grateful to my colleagues across government for their collaboration in making this possible," said Assembly Member Fall.

For more information or to RSVP, please contact publicinformation@nycourts.gov.