

New York State Court Officer Trainees

Video Program -- Narration of Chief Judge DiFiore

I'm Janet DiFiore, Chief Judge of the State of New York . . . and I want to take a few moments of your time to address you on behalf of all of us in the Unified Court System.

As you know, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread cancellation and suspension of countless business, professional, and educational activities all across the country.

New York State has been at the epicenter of this fast-moving and deadly public health crisis. And notwithstanding this previously unimagined place we now find ourselves in, the New York State Unified Court System has demonstrated its ability to pivot quickly to keep our courts up and running by creating a virtual court system that is

temporarily delivering our critical justice services through remote technology, in order to help contain the spread of the virus and, of course, safeguard the health of our judges, court officers, professional staff, lawyers, litigants and the general public.

But despite our best efforts and intentions, it has not been possible for the court system to safely continue all of our normal services and programs.

Effective March 17th, we suspended the training and instruction of the 211 New York State Court Officer Trainees who were scheduled to graduate from our Court Officers Academy this week.

The suspension became necessary when some of our Trainees contracted the virus. It became painfully clear that we would not be able to continue our intensive, in-person training regimen without

putting at risk the health and safety of the entire class and their instructors.

To all of you in this outstanding, much-needed class of 211 Trainees: we understand the impact of abruptly halting your four-month basic training program begun back in January; we appreciate the time and both the physical and emotional energy you have already invested; and we share your deep disappointment at not being able to see you graduate as scheduled on April 29th.

All of you were selected from a very deep pool of well-qualified applicants, and you were well on your way to obtaining the critical knowledge and skills necessary to carry out the important and challenging job of New York State Court Officer.

Over the course of 10 weeks, you received the finest professional instruction from our excellent team of full-time certified police

instructors. You reported to our new, state-of-the-art Academy, where your training was conducted under the able leadership of our Chief of Training, Joseph Baccellieri, Jr., and Chief of Public Safety, Michael Magliano.

And, fortunately, you were being prepared and conditioned to handle every conceivable on-the-job-challenge, including:

- Physical training and self-defense tactics;
- Basic life support and first aid;
- And firearms instruction.

You began hands-on training in everything from:

- Arrest procedures;
- To counter-terrorism training;
- Bomb detection;

- Domestic violence awareness;
- And how to properly and safely interact with the public.

Not to mention the very demanding academic curriculum,
covering:

- The New York State Penal Law and Criminal Procedure Law;
- As well as our complex court structure, agency policies, guidelines and other essential knowledge.

Now, of course, we will not commence our graduation ceremony this week, but I did not want the date that everyone had circled on their calendars to pass without assuring all of you, and your families, that we have not forgotten you, and that we are waiting for the day to arrive when you can safely resume and complete your training and proudly earn the shield of a New York State Court Officer.

In the meantime, I hope that each of you has been watching and taking inspiration from the heroic contributions of our uniformed Court Officers, who true to the oath they took to serve and protect, have been on the front lines of our court system throughout this crisis, putting themselves at risk so that we can keep our courts open and support and uphold the rule of law. And we take every opportunity to thank them and express our gratitude for their service -- well done and well earned.

I end my remarks today by expressing my gratitude to each of you, our soon-to-be New York State Court Officers, and to your families, for your patience and understanding in these difficult times. And we remind you to stay positive, and to use all that you have already learned in the Academy to help your families; to help your friends; and to help your communities get through this incredibly difficult period.

The latest COVID-19 developments give us reason to hope and pray that the worst may soon be over. But however long it does take to get back to our “new normal,” we can be sure of one thing: all the adversity we have experienced, and all the sacrifices we have made, will make every one of us, as well as our court system, our state and our entire nation, better, stronger and more resilient than ever before.

Thank you.

Stay well, be safe and remain disciplined in protecting yourself and all those around you.