

Daniel's Law Highlights the Need to Redact Public Records



Daniel's Law refers to laws in different states that protect the personal information of public servants and their families from being disclosed or published online. The original Daniel's Law, enacted in New Jersey in 2021, was inspired by the tragic death of Daniel Anderl, the son of Judge Esther Salas and Mark Anderl. Daniel's Law illustrates the need for [data privacy](#) and sensitive and informed [municipal data governance](#).

What is Daniel's Law in New Jersey?

Daniel's Law (P.L. 2021, c. 371) was signed by Governor Phil Murphy on January 19, 2021, in response to the fatal shooting of Daniel Anderl. The gunman had obtained the home address of Judge Esther Salas from public records. The attacker also wounded Mark Anderl, the husband of Judge Salas, before killing himself.

Daniel's Law prohibits the disclosure of the home addresses and phone numbers of certain public officials. The law protects active or retired federal and state judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers, and their immediate family members. It prohibits their information from being published on websites controlled by state, county, and local government agencies.

Daniel's law also prohibits individuals and businesses from publishing personal information online if they receive a request from a covered person to remove it.

The law allows covered persons to register for protection through a portal created by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The DCA will then notify the relevant agencies to redact their information from their websites. The law also requires the DCA to appoint redactors who will be responsible for carrying out the redaction process.



Why is Daniel's Law important?

Daniel's Law aims to prevent the harassment, intimidation, and violence that public servants and their families may face. Harassment or worse may come from disgruntled litigants, criminals, extremists, or other bad actors who easily access personal information online.

By limiting the exposure of personal information, Daniel's Law seeks to enhance the safety and privacy of those who serve the public interest and uphold the rule of law.

Daniel's Law also recognizes that public records are not always benign or harmless. Indeed, they can be used for nefarious purposes by those who intend to harm others. By creating a mechanism for redacting personal information from public records, Daniel's Law balances the need for [transparency and accountability](#) with the desire for security and protection.

Pre-Daniel's Law Harm

Unfortunately, Daniel Anderl was not the first or the last victim of violence or harassment resulting from personal information in public records. Below you'll find other examples of individuals who were hurt when their personal information was not redacted:

- In 2005, Judge Joan Lefkow found her husband and mother murdered in her home in Chicago by a white supremacist. The assailant had sued her over a trademark dispute and obtained her address from public records.
- In 2013, Judge Julie Kocurek was shot and wounded outside her home in Austin. The gunman had been indicted by her court and obtained her address from public records.



- In 2018, Judge Raymond Zondo received death threats after his home address was leaked online. Supporters of former President Jacob Zuma, whom he was investigating for corruption in South Africa, issued the threats.
- In 2020, Judge Amy Coney Barrett received threats and harassment after her home address was published online. An anti-abortion group circulated the information during her confirmation process for the Supreme Court.
- In 2021, Judge James Robart received threats and vandalism after his home address was posted online. Supporters of former President Donald Trump, whom he had ruled against in several cases, initiated the leak.

These examples illustrate how public records can put public servants and their families at risk. Daniel's Law serves as a step towards preventing such tragedies by ensuring that those who serve justice can do so without fear. Implemented by various agencies, Daniel's law and similar statutes require compliance and [effective information governance](#) to succeed.

Partner with Municipal Data Governance Specialists

Municipal governments face significant challenges to [achieving data transparency](#) while protecting information, the public, and public officials. Limited personnel and tight budgets are chief among them. Information silos, poor data quality, and poor communication between departments often result in non-compliance or inaccurate data.

The consultants at Messaging Architects partner with municipalities nationwide to build cost-efficient [data governance strategies](#). With proven tools and deep expertise, they help organizations streamline records management, implement [data compliance monitoring](#), and strengthen data security.