

Minnesota Man Faces Upgraded Charges in Lawmaker Killings

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MINNEAPOLIS, Prosecutors in Minnesota have filed upgraded state charges against Vance Boelter, a 58-year-old man accused of killing a prominent state lawmaker and her husband, and wounding another legislator and his wife, while posing as a police officer. The charges were announced Thursday, just one week after Boelter pleaded not guilty in a separate federal case.

Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty confirmed Boelter now faces two counts of first-degree murder, four counts of attempted first-degree murder, as well as charges of impersonating a police officer and animal cruelty for allegedly shooting a family dog. Moriarty said the charges “reflect the weight of Mr. Boelter’s crimes.”

The state prosecution, however, remains secondary to the federal case, where Boelter was indicted on July 15 on six counts, including murder, stalking, and firearms violations. Federal prosecutors have the option to seek the death penalty, though no decision has been made. Minnesota does not have a death penalty, meaning state convictions would carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Boelter entered a not guilty plea in federal court on August 7.

Authorities allege that in the early hours of June 14, after months of planning, Boelter targeted several state lawmakers. He allegedly arrived at the home of former Democratic House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, wearing a police-style uniform and mask. Posing as an officer, he is accused of fatally shooting both before moving on to other targets.

Prosecutors say Boelter then went to the home of state Senator John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette. The couple reportedly pushed him outside and shut the door before he fired through it, striking Hoffman nine times and his wife eight times. Both survived. Their nearby adult daughter was unharmed.

Federal investigators revealed that Boelter also drove to the homes of at least two other legislators during a 90-minute timeframe. One was Representative Kristin Bahner, who was not home at the time. Prosecutors allege Boelter rang her doorbell for two minutes while yelling “police” and trying to enter.

Moriarty’s office initially charged Boelter with second-degree murder and attempted murder to secure an arrest warrant, but these were later elevated to first-degree charges as more evidence emerged. Additional attempted murder charges were added Thursday.

Boelter was arrested on June 15 following an extensive search involving local, state, and federal agencies. The state case shows an application for a public defender was filed June 16, but one has yet to be assigned, as Boelter was transferred to federal custody before a state court appearance could take place.

Moriarty said her office stands ready to prosecute if and when Boelter is returned to state custody. “We will do everything in our power to ensure that he is never able to hurt anyone again,” she stated.

Moriarty, elected in 2022, recently announced she will not seek reelection next year. Her tenure has been marked by controversy over her approach to prosecution, which critics say has downplayed victims’ concerns while emphasizing reforms to address the underlying causes of crime.