



Illinois Sheriffs' Association

Sheriffs: New State Policy Allows Convicted Felons Evade Federal Authorities *Local Officials Warn That Radical Policy Shift Endangers Local Communities*

KANKAKEE, Ill. — Illinois Sheriffs are raising alarms that a recent policy change by the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) allows dangerous felons to be released back into Illinois communities. This is occurring despite valid requests by federal immigration authorities to transfer the convicted felons to a designated holding facility while the individual's immigration case is reviewed and adjudicated.

In 2019, 223 individuals were transferred to the Jerome Combs Detention Center in Kankakee after serving time at an IDOC facility for their felony convictions. This occurred via a notification from IDOC at the request of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Starting in January 2020, IDOC stopped notifying federal authorities and instead allowed these individuals to be released immediately from the correctional facility into Illinois communities where they had been serving their sentence.

“The public needs to know that this policy shift results in convicted felons being released back into our counties and neighborhoods without notice—despite federal authorities asking that they be transferred to another facility in the judicial system,” **said Sheriff Mike Downey of Kankakee County.**

More troubling to the sheriffs and law enforcement is that there is no notice or warning given to local or federal authorities when the individuals are released.

“The State of Illinois is helping convicted felons get a head start on evading federal authorities who simply want to do their job,” **said Christian County Sheriff Bruce Kettelkamp.** “The lack of coordination is raising the stakes that a dangerous or violent altercation will occur in our communities between a recently-released felon, who knows that immigration authorities are looking for them, and any law enforcement officer. This policy undermines the rule of law, endangers our local communities and puts the lives of our first responders at risk.”

A review of the transfers completed in 2019 by the Kankakee County Sheriff Office found that the individuals requested by ICE and transferred to the correctional facility had been convicted of committing the following crimes in Illinois:

- 36 individuals were found guilty of sexual offenses against minors, including crimes against individuals as young as 5 years old;
- 11 individuals were found guilty of murder, attempted murder or intent to kill or injure;
- 19 individuals were found guilty of predatory criminal sexual assault;
- 33 individuals were found guilty of a criminal offense involving a weapon;
- 50 individuals were found guilty of drug offenses involving a substance other than cannabis; and
- 55 individuals were found guilty of felony-level traffic offenses including aggravated DUI, having a fourth DUI or a DUI resulting in death.

The Illinois Sheriffs' Association urges Gov. Pritzker to reconsider the policy and enable IDOC to coordinate with its partner in law enforcement and criminal justice.