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Sheriff Lou Vallario
Garfield County, Colorado

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: April 2, 2024

Time: 10:05 AM

Title: Sanctuary Policies and the Sheriff's Position

IMPORTANT: Please direct any media requests to the contact above. Do not contact the Garfield County Emergency Communications Center or Patrol staff for media requests.

GARFIELD COUNTY, CO. –

From the Desk of Garfield County Sheriff Lou Vallario



The Board of County Commissioners recently addressed sanctuary policies by declaring that Garfield County is not a sanctuary county. This was partially intended to address a national organization that wrongfully lists on its website that Garfield County, and specifically the Garfield County Sheriff's Office, as sanctuary organizations. Their concern with me was that because we do not (cannot) hold undocumented migrants for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), we are therefore a sanctuary organization. Cooperation with ICE is the catalyst for this and I want to make it clear that I work with ALL law enforcement agencies to the degree I legally can.

So, what authority do I have as sheriff to enforce federal laws? None. I do not, nor do any Colorado state and local law enforcement officers, have federal immigration authority. We are limited to enforcing state and local crimes.

I say “legally” because the Colorado Legislature has enacted several laws limiting my ability to work with ICE. Further, several federal lawsuits across the country have decided that with no “criminal” charges (ICE holds are almost always “administrative” matters) people cannot be held in jail against their will. There is clearly an argument to be made that crossing our borders illegally is a crime, but it is a federal crime, and the Department of Homeland Security is the agency to manage that.

Colorado law requires that when an inmate is no longer being held on criminal charges by completing their sentence, bonding out, or being released by the courts on a Personal Recognizance Bond, I must release them within six hours. Their administrative status under federal law is not a consideration.

However, local ICE agents review our public jail website, which shows the status of everyone in jail. If ICE has an interest in detaining them because of the seriousness of their crimes, they notify the jail and ask that we let them know when that person of interest is going to be released, and we do. It is up to ICE to provide the resources to pick them up after they are released. Regardless, I cannot unnecessarily delay anyone’s release and must comply with the six-hour rule.

The concerns of illegal immigration and sanctuary practices are not going away. However, I wanted to make it clear what the sheriff’s role is in that complex problem.

Lou Vallario
Garfield County Sheriff

No additional information will be released.

The mission of the Garfield County Sheriff’s Office is to provide solutions for the people through professional, ethical and compassionate conduct.

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