



Idaho Sheriffs' Association

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March 19, 2026

RE: Opposition to Idaho House Bill 659 – Unfunded Mandate, Misrepresentation, and Erosion of Local Authority

To the Members of the Idaho Legislature,

On behalf of the Idaho Sheriff's Association and all 44 elected county sheriffs, we write to express our continued and unequivocal opposition to House Bill 659 and our serious concerns regarding both its substance and the process now unfolding following its hold in the Senate State Affairs Committee on March 16, 2026.

Idaho sheriffs are constitutional officers accountable to the citizens of our counties—not to political narratives or directives from outside Idaho. We are entrusted to uphold the law, protect our communities, and exercise independent judgment. We take that responsibility seriously, as we do our long-standing partnerships with federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Let us be clear: Idaho sheriffs already cooperate with ICE every day.

Sheriffs across Idaho share booking information, identify potential immigration violations, grant access to facilities, honor lawful detainees, and coordinate transfers. These practices are established, consistent, and effective. Any claim that Idaho sheriffs are failing in this responsibility is false and misleads the public while undermining the professionalism of law enforcement across this state. House Bill 659 does not strengthen these efforts. It simply creates redundancy, imposes costs, and removes local control.

The process behind this legislation is as troubling as the policy itself. Idaho sheriffs were not meaningfully consulted. The bill was mischaracterized as comparable to Florida's 2025 law, when in reality this bill goes significantly further—mandating participation in specific 287(g) program models and binding sheriffs and local police agencies to current and future federal programs regardless of cost, capacity, or operational impact.

Since the bill was held in committee, the situation has escalated. Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Homeland Security Advisor Staff Stephen Miller has directly contacted Idaho's executive and legislative leadership to influence the outcome of this legislation. That kind of outside pressure has no place in shaping Idaho public safety policy.

Following that contact by D.C. on March 17, it is our understanding that House and Senate leadership are driving efforts to rapidly draft and advance replacement legislation behind closed doors while once again excluding Idaho law enforcement from the process. This appears to be a deliberate attempt to force through policy changes without transparency, accountability, or input from those who will be responsible for carrying them out.

Idaho law should be written by Idahoans. It should not be driven by political pressure from Washington, D.C, or other outside political forces. Additionally, the democratic process has been followed on this bill. It has been heard in committee in both houses, and after passing the House Floor, the Senate Committee did its due diligence, and a vote was cast 5-4 to hold the bill in committee. For leadership to try to resurrect the bill because they didn't like the committee's answer after fair debate is disingenuous and an affront to the democratic process the people of this state expect.

The substance of these bill proposals remains flawed. The 287(g) program carries significant, unfunded costs, including training, staffing impacts, and liability exposure for local agencies with no reimbursement or protections for counties or cities. At a time when agencies already face staffing challenges, these mandates will further strain our ability to perform our primary duty: enforcing Idaho law and protecting our communities.

We are also compelled to address the continued misuse of public opinion data being used to justify this legislation. Claims that "81% of Idahoans" support increased immigration enforcement is actually national polling data and is not Idaho-specific. Idaho-based research actually tells a different story. The Boise State University Public Policy Survey shows that 53% of respondents believe increased ICE presence would harm Idaho's agricultural economy. Additionally, around 56% of Idaho respondents "strongly" supported, and 29% "somewhat" supported, a pathway to legal working status for dairy workers and their families who have lived in Idaho for over 10 years and have no criminal record.

Policy decisions of this magnitude must be grounded in accurate information. They should not be made based on selectively presented statistics or without the necessary input from the agencies and individuals who would be directly impacted.

Finally, and most importantly, these efforts undermine the authority of Idaho's elected sheriffs. We are accountable to our communities and must retain discretion over how we allocate resources and engage with federal partners.

While we respect and support any sheriff who chooses to participate in a 287(g) program as several Idaho sheriffs have already done, that decision must remain local. The Legislature frequently champions local control as a core Idaho value. It is difficult to reconcile that principle with legislation that removes local discretion the moment it becomes politically convenient.

We urge the Legislature to reject any attempt to revive or repackage House Bill 659 through a rushed or opaque process. Any proposal of this magnitude must include transparency, meaningful collaboration with Idaho law enforcement, and sufficient time for careful consideration. Idaho's sheriffs stand ready to be part of the solution. We will not, however, support legislation that is developed without us, imposed upon us, and ultimately detrimental to the communities we are sworn to protect.

Respectfully,



Andy Creech
Payette County Sheriff
Legislative Chair, Idaho Sheriffs Association



Dave Hansen
Butte County Sheriff
President, Idaho Sheriffs Association



Keiran Donahue
Canyon County Sheriff
ISA Legislative Committee Member



Matt Clifford
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Tony Manu
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