



PAYETTE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Payette County Sheriff's Public Statement on Cooperation with ICE and Proposed Legislation

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As the elected Sheriff of Payette County, my duty is to safeguard the people who live, work, and raise families in our community. That responsibility includes upholding Idaho law, honoring the U.S. and Idaho Constitutions, and maintaining practical, lawful partnerships with our federal agencies to ensure public safety.

There has been recent discussion suggesting that sheriffs in Idaho, including the Payette County Sheriff's Office, do not cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). That claim is simply not true.

For more than 20 years, the Payette County Sheriff's Office has worked in cooperation with ICE and other federal partners. This includes sharing inmate booking information, notifying ICE of inmates who may be in the country unlawfully, providing ICE access to our jail and inmates, and honoring lawful ICE detainers. These are not new practices. They are established, consistent, and effective.

Our approach is straightforward: we work within our scope of authority and allow our federal partners to operate within theirs. This model ensures that each agency focuses on its primary responsibilities while still working together to protect the public. It is a system that brings resources into our community without unnecessarily duplicating efforts or overextending limited local staffing.

Recently, legislation has been proposed that would require sheriffs to enter into a formal 287(g) agreement with ICE. While that program may be appropriate for some jurisdictions, the key issue is that this legislation would mandate participation without regard for the size, resources, or operational realities of individual counties.

For Payette County, this raises several serious concerns.

First, this is an unfunded mandate. Our county is already operating under increasing financial pressure. Recent changes at the state level have reduced stable funding sources while shifting us toward more unpredictable revenue. At the same time, we are competing with larger agencies and neighboring jurisdictions for a limited pool of law enforcement professionals. Requiring additional duties, without providing funding for staffing, training, or equipment, places a direct burden on our local taxpayers.

Second, the proposed agreement creates significant liability risks. Under a 287(g) model, our deputies would be asked to perform federal immigration enforcement duties. However, the agreement does not provide liability protection for those actions. This exposes Payette County to potential federal lawsuits without the protections and limitations that exist under Idaho law. Any legal costs, settlements, or judgments would ultimately be paid by the citizens of this county.



Third, the impact on staffing cannot be overlooked. Like many rural agencies, we already face challenges in recruiting and retaining employees. Our jail, which ranges from 27 to over 50 years old, depending on the section, was not designed for modern operations and requires additional staffing just to meet current needs. Adding new federal responsibilities to our jail deputies, who are often our newest and least experienced staff, would increase workload, require additional training, and likely force us to hire more personnel without any federal reimbursement.

To provide context, in the past year, we booked 1,157 individuals into the Payette County Jail. Of those, eight had immigration holds. In each of those cases, we worked with ICE, and those individuals were held until transfer arrangements were made. This demonstrates that our current system of cooperation is functioning as intended.

The Payette County Sheriff's Office will continue to partner with local, state, and federal agencies to protect our community. These partnerships are critical, and they work best when each agency is allowed to operate within its area of expertise while supporting one another when needed.

This issue is not about whether we cooperate with ICE. We do, and we will continue to do so.

The concern is about maintaining local control, avoiding unfunded mandates, managing risk, and ensuring that we can continue to meet our primary responsibility: protecting the citizens of Payette County.

As your Sheriff, I remain accountable to you. I will continue to advocate for policies that support public safety while also being fiscally responsible and operationally realistic for our community.