



March 16, 2017

Riverside County Legislative Representatives
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA

Subject: SB 54 – Oppose

Dear Riverside County Legislative Representatives:

As the Sheriff of Riverside County, I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 54. This bill creates a severe public safety problem by limiting, and in some cases eliminating, our ability to communicate with our federal government law enforcement partners. SB 54 could result in potentially dangerous offenders being released to our streets and endangers our citizens.

Sheriffs do not wish to act as immigration police, nor are they, and we protect EVERYONE in our communities regardless of immigration status. That said, we need to continue to cooperate with our law enforcement partners to ensure that those who victimize our communities are not given unnecessary opportunities to do more harm.

While recent amendments to this bill attempt to clarify a local agency's ability to participate in a law enforcement task force with federal partners, the bill still lacks clarity as to lawful joint-agency task force participation and it now imposes reporting requirements as to the nature of the law enforcement participation in a task force. And while the latest version of the bill attempts to allow some communication between local and federal authorities, SB 54 continues to preclude communication about potentially dangerous people. Specifically, the language only allows communication with the FBI (not ICE) in cases in which a person serving a term for a misdemeanor conviction, who also has a prior conviction for a violent felony, is about to be released. This language does not permit law enforcement to communicate about persons convicted of felonies and who are in jail custody or persons alleged to have committed a criminal offense. Precluding communication with ICE about, and prohibiting ICE access to, jail inmates of interest to ICE is likely to push ICE apprehension efforts out to communities, where unfortunate collateral impacts on the family members of those wanted persons are likely.


SB 54 stands to further separate people from their families and their communities by precluding the detention of persons for immigration purposes as currently happens in some California counties pursuant to unique federal contracts. The bill may keep these persons from being held in California jails, but they will still be detained somewhere, and it is likely that their detention will take place much further from their communities, networks, and families, and possibly even out of state. In seeking to solve a perceived problem, SB 54 creates significant new family issues.

The breakdown of local, state, and federal partnerships that will occur if this bill becomes law will prevent violent criminals from being kept off our streets. We additionally remain concerned that the bill's provisions restricting interaction with federal authorities could be construed in such a way that vital federal funding could be jeopardized. We also have significant questions about the constitutionality of this measure.

In sum, this bill represents bad law and even worse public policy. It is important we not have to relearn the lessons of 9-11 all over again where that terrorist attack was facilitated by the failures of federal, state, and local agencies to communicate and properly share information.

For the reasons stated above, I strongly oppose SB 54 and urge a no vote by each of you. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us at (951) 955-0147.

Sincerely,



Sheriff Stan Sniff
Riverside County

CC: Senator Mike Morrell, Senator Richard Roth, Senator Jeff Stone, Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, Assemblymember Randy Voepel, Assemblymember Sabrina Cervantes, Assemblymember Chad Mayes, Assemblymember Jose Medina, Assemblymember Melissa Melendez, and Assemblymember Marie Waldron

California State Sheriffs' Association (CSSA)