



United States House Committee on the Judiciary

“Sanctuary Policies: Victims’ Perspectives”

Tuesday June 30th, 2026

2:00 PM

Opening Statement

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

My name is Gary Redman, and I have served as the Sheriff of Amador County, California, since 2021. I began my law enforcement career in the United States Air Force as a Security Police Officer, serving both in the United States and Germany from 1988 to 1992. In 1996, I started my civilian law enforcement career with the Los Angeles Police Department. In 1998, I joined the Amador County Sheriff's Office, where I have served in every rank from Deputy Sheriff to Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Undersheriff, and now Sheriff.

Today, I would like to share my perspective on the impact illegal immigration has had on a small rural county such as Amador County. Located in California's Gold Country east of Sacramento, Amador County covers 594 square miles and is served by just 54 sworn deputies and approximately 40 correctional deputies. Providing public safety services across such a large geographic area presents unique challenges.

From 1999 through 2015, I served eight years as a SWAT operator and another eight years as a SWAT team leader responsible for high-risk search warrants and tactical operations. During that time, many large-scale illegal marijuana cultivation operations in Amador County and neighboring counties were controlled by Mexican drug cartels. These organizations frequently utilized individuals who had been smuggled into the United States to work at cultivation sites. Many of these individuals were armed and, on occasion, engaged law enforcement officers.

These operations posed significant risks not only to law enforcement personnel but also to the public. Amador County attracts more than 20,000 visitors annually to its streams, rivers, lakes, hiking trails, and campgrounds. Hikers and outdoor enthusiasts have encountered illegal cultivation sites and armed individuals. Cartels also smuggled banned pesticides into the region, causing substantial environmental damage and harming local wildlife.

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Between 2015 and 2025, Amador County investigated 73 illegal marijuana cultivation operations involving individuals believed to be unlawfully present in the United States. Arrests or charges resulting from those investigations included:

- 173 individuals of Asian origin, including persons from China, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam
- 53 Mexican nationals
- 1 Venezuelan national
- 2 Ukrainian nationals
- 2 South African nationals
- 1 Guatemalan national

I oversee a county jail with a rated capacity of 76 beds and an average daily population in the 90s. Although we recently completed a 40-bed expansion project, like many law enforcement agencies across the nation, we face significant recruitment and retention challenges. As a result, we are currently unable to utilize the new housing unit.

During President Biden's administration and following the implementation of California Senate Bill 54 (SB 54), our agency generally ceased inquiring about immigration status or contacting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding individuals in our custody who were suspected of being unlawfully present in the country. In my view, this policy contributed to criminal offenders being released back into the community, where some continued patterns of reoffending and victimizing others.

Since President Trump returned to office and federal immigration enforcement priorities changed, we have cooperated with ICE to the fullest extent permitted under SB 54. Unfortunately, some individuals are still released because they do not meet the statutory thresholds required for ICE notification or transfer.

As Sheriff, my highest priority is protecting public safety. In early 2025, I made the decision that I would not knowingly release an undocumented criminal offender who posed a significant threat to public safety back into the community, even if doing so placed me at odds with SB 54.

On September 2, 2024, my office received a report involving a 14-year-old girl who disclosed to her cousin that her uncle, Adan Diazmendoza, age 46, had been touching her over her clothing in the vaginal area. A deputy responded to the lake where the family was present and interviewed the visibly distraught victim. She reported that the abuse had been occurring for approximately five months outside Amador County.

Using a Spanish-language interpretation service via mobile phone, my deputy interviewed the suspect and established probable cause to arrest him for felony lewd acts involving a minor. Two days later, the suspect appeared in court and was released by the judge. Had current federal immigration enforcement policies been in place at that time, I would have contacted ICE and requested that agents take him into custody before his release. Under SB 54, such notification would have been permissible because the court had found probable cause for the offense.

In 2025, I was informed by our Probation Department that Diazmendoza had entered into a plea agreement negotiated by an Amador County Deputy District Attorney. The agreement reduced the case to a misdemeanor offense with credit for time served and a suspended probation sentence. I was advised that the plea agreement was structured, at least in part, because of my publicly stated position regarding cooperation with ICE and the likelihood that ICE would be notified upon his release.

Upon learning of the plea agreement, I immediately contacted ICE and requested that agents take him into custody upon his release from court. Due to the limited notice, ICE was unable to respond that day. However, agents located and arrested him approximately two weeks later. We subsequently informed the victim and her mother, both of whom expressed appreciation for our efforts and relief that he would no longer have access to the victim.

Since 2025, we have contacted ICE eight times regarding removals authorized under SB 54. In two of those cases, ICE was unable to respond before the individuals were released, resulting in two felony offenders returning to the community. Additionally, under SB 54, I have been required to release 16 individuals arrested for lower-level offenses.

My greatest concern is that one of these individuals may reoffend and cause another preventable tragedy such as Laken Riley. In my view, public policy should prioritize accountability for criminal offenders, protection for victims, and the safety of law-abiding citizens. I believe it is long overdue that we place greater emphasis on victims' rights, hold offenders accountable, and ensure that public safety remains our highest priority.

Thank you for your time and consideration.