



Susan Pamerleau
Sheriff
Bexar County, Texas

April 11, 2016

The Honorable Brian Birdwell
Texas Senate
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator Birdwell:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee on March 23 about the challenges of changes to federal immigration policy and how those changes affect public safety in Bexar County and across the State of Texas.

At the hearing, I was asked to respond to a January 15, 2016 article from The Texas Tribune ("Jails Refused to Hold Thousands of Immigrants for Feds"). The article states, "More than 18,000 times over the past two years, local jails across the country have failed to hand over deportable immigrants to federal authorities, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement records obtained by The Texas Tribune." The article continues, "A distant second to Travis is Bexar County, where Democrats have pushed a proposal to adopt 'sanctuary city' as an official label. There the federal agency's records show declined detainees on 11 inmates, four of whom had a prior criminal history."

After investigating this matter, I found no evidence that the Bexar County Sheriff's Office has declined any immigration detainees. I believe the confusion on this issue may stem from a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the terminology involved, which is addressed in another quote from the article:

"Many said the agency's definition of a 'declined detainee' was misleading because it included circumstances beyond their control, such as cases where inmates were transferred to other jurisdictions in response to outstanding warrants or had to be released after federal authorities failed to pick them up within 48 hours. An agency official acknowledged that in jurisdictions with low numbers of declined detainees, the totals could contain minor administrative errors on either the local or federal level."

In the case of the eleven Bexar County inmates in question, we believe they were transferred to other facilities or jurisdictions, including the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to serve prison sentences. Since they were no longer here, they were listed as "declined". However, without specific information from the Department of Homeland Security identifying these eleven inmates, we are unable to validate specific information about each inmate.

We have complied with all requests otherwise.

We have also contacted the offices of Congressman Michael McCaul and Congressman Lamar Smith to inquire about the eleven Bexar County inmates in question. I am hopeful they will be able to glean the appropriate information from the US Department of Homeland Security, so we can provide a more accurate response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Pamerleau".

SUSAN PAMERLEAU
Sheriff
Bexar County

CC:

The Honorable Dan Patrick
Texas Lieutenant Governor

The Honorable Donna Campbell
Texas Senator

The Honorable Konnie Burton
Texas Senator

The Honorable Sylvia Garcia
Texas Senator

The Honorable Robert Hall
Texas Senator

The Honorable Eddie Lucio, Jr.
Texas Senator

The Honorable Jose Rodriguez
Texas Senator

The Honorable Carlos I. Uresti
Texas Senator

The Honorable Judith Zaffirini
Texas Senator

The Honorable Jose Menendez
Texas Senator

The Honorable Trey Martinez Fischer
Texas Representative

The Honorable Rick Galindo
Texas Representative

The Honorable Juan Lujan
Texas Representative

The Honorable Roland Gutierrez
Texas Representative

The Honorable Joe Straus
Texas Representative

The Honorable Lyle Larson
Texas Representative

The Honorable Diego M. Bernal
Texas Representative

The Honorable Ina Minjarez
Texas Representative

The Honorable Justin Rodriguez
Texas Representative

Sheriff A.J. Louderback
Sheriff's Association of Texas

Mr. Jay Root, Reporter
Texas Tribune