



SHERIFF DAN WALSH CHAMPAIGN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

January 29, 2013

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Dan Walsh

Sheriff

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Records/Warrants

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United States Congressman John Shimkus United States Congressman Rodney Davis
United States Senator Mark Kirk United States Senator Dick Durbin
Illinois State Senator Chapin Rose Illinois State Senator Michael Frerichs
Illinois State Senator Jason Barickman Illinois State Representative Chad Hays
Illinois State Representative Naomi Jakobsson

RE: Firearms/Mental Health

Dear United States & Illinois State Senators & Representatives,

Because of recent tragedies and justifiable anger over the senseless loss of life, including innocent young children, the rhetoric about firearms has intensified. This has occurred at both the state and federal level.

I am the Sheriff of the 10th largest county in Illinois which is located in the central part of the state. I wish to briefly address some of the issues now being discussed. I will keep this short as I am sure you are inundated with constituent thoughts on these matters.

First as to conceal carry laws: For many years I have said that law abiding citizens with firearms have not and will not pose a problem for deputies and police officers in our county. I do believe that some of the public street muggings or beatings of our local citizens may not have occurred if the perpetrator was concerned with an armed victim. Certainly appropriate background checks, some limitations (e.g. alcohol consumption) and a requirement to notify upon initial contact with a police officer if a person is armed, and other requirements are appropriate. There is no real public safety reason not to pass a conceal carry law.

As to both the State and Federal issues now being raised as to types of weapons and capacities of magazines: I believe that in Central Illinois there are probably thousands of rifles generally similar in design or function to an AR15 and many more thousands of larger capacity magazines.

I am unaware of any situations in Champaign County or Central Illinois, where these types of rifles were used illegally. Since a magazine can be changed in the blink of any eye, I cannot see any real safety advantage in passing laws that limit capacity. Certainly there is this no reason to limit this capacity of handguns used by police, security and persons in defense of themselves or their homes.

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While I speak only for this Office, I do believe most law enforcement officers in this area support a law abiding citizen's right to carry and possess firearms (including semi automatic) with appropriate background checks and other reasonable requirements.

If you really want to increase public safety, reduce crime and improve the general quality of life, please do something about the real crisis in the lack of appropriate mental health facilities and treatment.

As I read about the ongoing mental health problems with the persons who engage in the mass shootings nationwide and as I daily deal with persons in our jail that have severe mental health problems I realize that this problem, which was bad years ago, is getting worse. I enclose a copy of a letter I sent to our State Senators and Representatives six years ago. The lack of appropriate care faculties and treatment in our communities has gotten much worse. As of last week we had seven people ordered to DHS for confined mental health hospitalization with some awaiting space since October 2012. Please devote your efforts and our limited monies to these very real issues.

I see no reason to get into a constitutional law debate because I see no public safety or crime prevention reason to pass laws that likely infringe on law abiding citizen's rights and their personal safety. Also, as you know we are not a Federal Agency and do not enforce federal executive directives or orders.

If you wish to discuss any of these matters, please give me a call. I would really like to discuss the severe mental health issues that are truly impacting public safety (crime) on the streets and almost all jails in Illinois. Those, in jail, awaiting a DHS space represent only the tip of the iceberg. We have many others in jail that need extensive mental health care and a jail is not the best environment to recover from such illness. Likewise, on the street we have a lot more people who need substantial long term care (medication, counseling and other services) but cannot find or afford it. Too often these people commit crimes, sometimes very serious and harming others, then end up in jail.

Unfortunately, the lack of care and these problems adversely affect the quality of life for those in need, their families and ordinary citizens impacted by their behavior.

Thank you for your consideration.

DJWtss

xc: States Attorney Julia Rietz
Al Kurtz, Chair, Champaign County Board

Sincerely,



Dan Walsh
Sheriff



SHERIFF DAN WALSH
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

January 11, 2007

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Illinois State Senator Michael Frerichs
Illinois State Senator Dan Rutherford
Illinois State Representative Shane Cultra
Illinois State Representative Naomi Jakobsson
Illinois State Representative Chapin Rose
Illinois State Representative Bill Black

Re: DHS – Mental Health Facilities

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Capt. Jim Young

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Records/Warrants

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Dear Illinois State Senators & Representatives,

In my little over four years in office, I have noticed a troublesome trend. We are getting more and more people in jail who have very significant mental health problems. Both the number of persons and the severity of their problems are increasing.

When I first took office we might occasionally have one or two people waiting for bed space in DHS. Now we typically have three to four and the waits to find a bed are longer and longer.

We presently have four awaiting space in DHS. Two of them have been here awaiting a bed for about six weeks; we hope to place one in about another two weeks and another three to four weeks on the other. Another has been here about three weeks awaiting a space, but he is deteriorating rapidly, both medically and in terms of his mental health. The last is a very recent order to DHS.

These are people who consume tremendous amounts of staff time; officers, medical people and mental health professionals. These are people who eat and/or throw fecal material, try to harm themselves, won't eat, won't keep their clothes on and/or see imaginary things or hear voices. These are folks who may need "forced medications."

County jails and their staff are not designed or equipped physically or legally (emergency forced medications) to deal with these folks. Obviously when we have individuals who want to harm themselves, there is potential liability to the County taxpayers.

I would request you look into the shortage of beds/facilities of DHS and increase funding to meet the needs of these individuals.

Sincerely,

Dan Walsh

Sheriff

DJW:tss

xc: Greg Sullivan, Illinois Sheriffs' Association
Judge Thomas J. Difanis
State's Attorney Julia Rietz
Public Defender Randy Rosenbaum