

United States Senate
Committee on the Budget
“Sanctuary Cities: The Cost of Undermining Law and Order”
Full Committee Hearing

Testimony of Sheriff Michael L. Chapman
March 10, 2026

Chairman Graham, Ranking member Senator Merkley, and other members of this committee. I am Loudoun County Sheriff Mike Chapman and lead Virginia’s most complex and largest full-service Sheriff’s Office employing over 900. Loudoun County sits just outside of Washington, DC, and is home to Leesburg, Middleburg, and the Dulles International Airport.

In Loudoun County, we celebrate a diverse community, have an extraordinarily diverse workforce, welcome everyone here legally, and within our organization, speak over 25 different languages.

I have served 47 years in this profession as a local police officer, a career DEA special agent, and for the past fourteen years, as an elected sheriff. I am honored to sit before you today to discuss our mutual concern of sanctuary cities and counties. I am fortunate that Loudoun County is part of a traditional form of government that enables the sheriff to conduct all law enforcement, jail and court operations under one roof - essentially making me both a sheriff and police chief. That differs significantly from our surrounding jurisdictions where appointed county, city and town police chiefs are the norm.

Loudoun’s form of government has enabled me to make decisions in the best interests of our citizens, free of mandated political agendas. It has also allowed me to be the only Republican law enforcement leader in all Northern Virginia. That responsibility is a double-edged sword. While I don’t answer to our 7-2 Democratic Board of Supervisors for policy decisions, I do receive my budget from them. This dichotomy causes significant friction, making this a very challenging area. Our system of government, however, provides our citizens with a check and balance. We endured a 2-year battle with our Board of Supervisors who pursued converting our sheriff’s office into a police department several years ago to exercise complete power and control over our agency. We defeated this aggressive action because our citizens ultimately decided that they prefer having a direct voice in who leads their public safety through the election process.

This system and our commonsense approach to problems, putting citizens first, is why our Sheriff’s Office has been awarded the “Favorite Government Service” for two years running by our local newspaper, and why I have been selected as “Favorite Public Servant” for the past five years.

Regarding immigration, it is important to distinguish criminal aliens who pose a threat to our community from immigrants here legally. Consequently, while our surrounding jurisdictions choose to be sanctuaries, not make this distinction, and not honor ICE detainers, we do just the opposite.

We have always cooperated with all of our state, local and federal counterparts, including ICE, and have routinely notified ICE of those in our custody for criminal offenses who also had active detainers issued by ICE, regardless of the Presidential Administration. We honor all detainers and warrants from other law enforcement jurisdictions just as I would expect them to honor ours. These practices likely contribute to why our agency has the lowest crime rate in the DC - Northern Virginia area, and is one of the safest counties in the nation.

That doesn't mean we're exempt from problems related to illegal immigration. In 2024, we experienced five homicides, three of which were committed by people here illegally. Two of the three were committed by an MS-13 gang member. In a neighboring county, one that refuses to contact ICE regarding criminals they arrest, two homicides were committed in just over the past two months. One occurred within 24 hours after the criminal, who had an outstanding ICE detainer on him, was released from jail without any notification to ICE. The other, police questioned why the subject had been released and warned the prosecutor of the danger, stating, "not if, but when" he assaulted again - resulting in a grandmother being stabbed to death at a bus stop. This exemplifies what happens with sanctuary counties - law enforcement's hands are tied by politicians and political agendas.

Last year, I signed on to the 287g Warrant Service Officer Program which enabled us to hold a person arrested for a criminal violation an additional 48 hours for ICE in the event ICE couldn't pick them up immediately. This enabled us to safely turn over criminal illegal aliens to ICE who, otherwise, would have been released into our community and could pose an additional threat to our residents. This simple process has kept ICE from having to conduct street operations. I have told my community that not turning over criminal aliens to ICE who could endanger our residents would be irresponsible, and dangerous to the very people I've sworn an oath to protect.

This process, which has worked well for us, is likely to become far more challenging considering the legislation currently in motion in Richmond. Our governor rescinded the previous administration's Executive Order which had enabled jurisdictions to cooperate ICE. This was followed by legislation proposed by both houses of our General Assembly which, if passed and signed by the Governor, will likely require judicial warrants from ICE for local law enforcement to act on anything. Considering illegal immigration is a civil offense, this action will no doubt force us to release detainees, incarcerated by us for criminal offenses unrelated to immigration, back into our communities where they will pose an additional threat to our residents.

If this committee can exercise any leverage to influence a different outcome, I'm confident that law enforcement officials throughout Virginia and other locations who are facing similar challenges, would be grateful. We take our jobs seriously and want to keep all of our citizens safe.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.