



MECKLENBURG COUNTY SHERIFF

GARRY L. MCFADDEN

*Working to influence change by being...
“the difference”*



“Missed Opportunity”, ICE Comes to Charlotte, Sidesteps Sheriff Collaboration

Charlotte, N.C. - The recent arrests of 24 undocumented immigrants conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Mecklenburg County highlight a fundamental issue that has persisted for far too long: the lack of communication and transparency between ICE and local law enforcement. ICE claims that six of the 24 individuals arrested had active detainers that the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) did not honor. That is correct—because the law is clear. I do not have the authority to hold individuals in my detention center beyond a judge's order unless ICE provides a warrant signed by a judge. ICE is well aware of this, yet they continue to mislead the public, blaming MCSO for not doing something that would be unlawful. My duty is to uphold the law and the Constitution—not to act outside of my legal authority at the request of a federal agency that refuses to follow proper procedures.

Despite repeated attempts to work with ICE, our efforts to obtain even the most basic information about these recent arrests have been ignored. I have personally reached out multiple times, seeking the names of the individuals ICE arrested to better understand their backgrounds and ensure public safety. My office has sent multiple emails and made phone calls to ICE officials at various levels, only to be met with silence or deflection. Yet, ICE had no issue coming to Charlotte last week to speak with the media - without expressing any interest to communicate with the very agency it criticizes for a lack of cooperation.

Below is a detailed timeline of my attempts to converse with ICE officials.

•On March 18, 2025 at 1:03 p.m., I emailed ICE's ERO Atlantic Field Office Chief of Staff, asking the agency for its intentions regarding undocumented immigrants who are being held for an additional 48 hours, per House Bill 10 (HB-10). I mentioned the number of undocumented immigrants we've held since the implementation of HB-10 and the cost to taxpayers. I received no response on ICE's intentions going forward.

•On March 19, 2025 at 9:16 a.m., I emailed ICE's ERO Atlantic Field Office Chief of Staff, requesting the names of the six people who were arrested in Charlotte by ICE. I received no response.

•On March 19, 2025 at 2:31 p.m., my Public Information Officer, Sarah Mastouri, emailed ICE's Media Operations Unit Chief for the Southeast, who replied he would check with the enforcement team. When she didn't receive a response, Sarah asked for an update via email on March 20, 2025 at 9:57 a.m. At 11:24 a.m. on that same day, the Media Operations Unit Chief for the Southeast responded, “Due to privacy laws, I cannot disclose that information. However, you can request this information through the Freedom of Information Act. Please visit the link below to submit a request. <https://www.ice.gov/foia>.”

•On March 20, 2025 between 1:45 p.m. and 2:45 p.m., I called the Media Operations Unit Chief for the Southeast myself, as well as the ERO Atlanta Field Office Director. The Media Operations Unit Chief for the Southeast told me he isn't authorized to provide me the names, despite MCSO, a law enforcement agency, being blamed in the press release ICE sent for not honoring detainers. I was told the Media Operations Unit Chief for the Southeast would connect with the appropriate people to get the names for me. I never received a response or follow up. When I called the ERO Atlanta Field Office Director, I left a message and of course, I didn't receive a call back.

Furthermore, I have serious concerns about ICE's priorities. Of the 24 individuals arrested, how many have been federally charged or indicted? If they are as dangerous as ICE suggests, why has no federal complaint been filed against them? Meanwhile, we have nearly 12,000 outstanding criminal warrants in Mecklenburg County—many involving violent offenses. Yet, ICE focuses on individuals with civil immigration violations while failing to follow the legal steps to take them into federal custody. There is nothing outstanding about these 24 undocumented immigrants that have civil warrants on them, as this is something law enforcement deals with everyday. If these individuals truly pose a threat, ICE should be filing the necessary federal charges to ensure they are prosecuted.

Since the implementation of HB-10, MCSO has held 180 undocumented individuals for the additional 48-hour period ICE requested -at a cost of nearly \$70,000 to taxpayers - only for ICE to fail to pick them up. Where is the accountability?

MCSO is not the problem here. We are following the law. ICE must do the same. I will not unlawfully detain individuals on ICE's behalf, and I will not allow misinformation to go unchallenged. If ICE wants true cooperation, they need to start by answering their phone, responding to emails, and following the proper channels - just like every other law enforcement agency is expected to do. I want to work with ICE. But cooperation is a two-way street.

As a law enforcement agency, after a week later, we are still seeking the names of the individuals ICE recently arrested. This is what collaboration looks like, and we hope to hear back soon.