



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS STATEMENT REGARDING ICE ARREST AT SONOMA COUNTY COURT HOUSE

District Attorney Jill Ravitch, Public Defender Kathleen Pozzi, and County Counsel Bruce Goldstein condemn the recent arrest of at least three individuals in and around the Sonoma County Superior Court on Tuesday February 18, 2020 by U.S. Immigration and Customs Agents. Ravitch previously signed a letter to then Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly objecting to immigration enforcement arrests in and around California courthouses. Ravitch's objection mirrored that of Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye who strongly opposed using the court system as part of a tactic to take into custody immigrants who were accessing the courts to seek justice. Ravitch stated that "ICE detention actions have no place in the court building, where they have the effect of scaring away witnesses and victims, and undermines the District Attorney's Office ability to hold the guilty accountable and protect crime victims."

Ravitch previously received a response from the then Acting Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Thomas D. Homan, indicating that notwithstanding objections made, ICE would continue to conduct targeted enforcement actions around Courthouses, stating that courthouses are not sensitive locations under ICE policy.

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra issued a manual entitled Securing Equal Access to Justice for All – Guidance and Model Policies to Assist California's Superior Courts in Responding to Immigration Issues (2018). He notes "State court judges have statutory and inherent authority to regulate the conduct of individuals within their immediate presence to facilitate the access to and ensure the administration of justice. Courts can exercise that authority by enacting a policy establishing that detentions or arrests for immigration enforcement purposes within the courtroom disrupt court proceedings and deny access to justice." See California Code of Civil Procedure sections 128(a), 177.

Public Defender Kathleen Pozzi echoed the District Attorney in stating that "ICE operations have no place in the Court building. The public should know that ICE enforcement affects everyone, including witnesses, victims and those coming to the courthouse on non-serious offenses." Pozzi noted that both sides are disadvantaged when an accused can not appear to answer charges, and indicated that she may demand speedy trials for those detained, which may result in the dismissal of pending criminal cases.

Sheriff Mark Essick confirmed that its Office received a call to dispatch at 7:45 a.m. noticing a visit by ICE agents to 600 Mendocino Avenue, which is the location of Sonoma County Superior Court's Criminal division, the DA's Office, and the Office of the Public Defender. He stated that "the Sheriff's Office did not collaborate with Homeland Security agents in these courthouse arrests and has strict policies regarding any coordination with ICE."

County Counsel Bruce Goldstein also stated that "ICE's actions are lawless in that their actions are carried out without judicial warrants and violate recently passed state law prohibiting civil arrests at a courthouse. Rather than protect our community, these immigration arrests undermine our system of justice."