

Leading The Way For A Safer COUNTRY

Florida sheriff's offices have finally been released from the tight spot between a rock and a hard place in which they have been trapped for too long in regards to the holding of criminal illegal immigrants.

For more than 25 years, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) issued immigration detainers requesting county sheriff's offices hold illegal immigrants who had been arrested for local crimes so that ICE could pick them up upon completion of their state charges.

However, because immigration is a federal responsibility, in 2014, federal courts ruled that these detainers did not provide lawful authority to sheriffs, exposing them to potential civil liability should they continue to hold illegal immigrants for ICE.

"We had to choose between releasing criminals from our jails to commit more crimes and victimize our communities, or hold these illegal aliens and risk being sued and having to pay six-figure judgments for civil rights violations," **Sheriff Bob Gualtieri** said.

At a news conference Wednesday, January 17th, Sheriff Gualtieri joined representatives from ICE, the National Sheriffs' Association, Major County Sheriffs of America, and several Florida sheriff's offices to announce that this will no longer be the case in 17 Florida jurisdictions.

These groups have developed a new process based on a Basic Ordering Agreement (BOA) model. Although not a

contract, a BOA is a set of terms negotiated between an agency and a service provider that provides a description of services to be executed, terms applicable to future orders between the parties, and a method for pricing, issuing, and delivering on future orders.

"To be clear, there is plenty of room for broad discussion and debate on the complex illegal immigration topic. But what we are discussing today is not about people who are simply here illegally, and it's not about the politics of illegal immigration," Sheriff Gualtieri said. "It's entirely about public safety and law enforcement working together so that those we are sworn to protect do not unnecessarily become crime victims at the hands of the estimated 1 million criminal illegal aliens in the United States."

On the day of the news conference, ICE representatives hosted a brief training about the new agreement and how it would be implemented for attending sheriffs and command staff members.

The 17 partner jurisdictions, including Pinellas, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, and Sarasota counties, will participate in the BOA process roll-out to ensure a smooth transition, but ICE plans to gradually expand implementation with willing law enforcement offices throughout the year.

"Immigration enforcement is solely the responsibility of the federal government," Sheriff Gualtieri said, "but public safety is the responsibility of all law enforcement officers."

