

## National Sheriffs' Association head tears into feds' 'sanctuary' list

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Canyon County, Idaho, Sheriff Kieran Donahue in 2024. Donahue recently criticized the Department of Homeland Security. (Sarah A. Miller/Idaho Statesman/TNS)

By [Carolyn Komatsoulis](#)

*The Idaho Statesman*

President of the National Sheriff's Association and Canyon County, Idaho, Sheriff Kieran Donahue over the weekend criticized the release of what the Department of Homeland Security said was a list of jurisdictions defying federal immigration law.

“The completion and publication of this list has not only violated the core principles of trust, cooperation and partnership with fellow law enforcement, but it also has the potential to strain the relationship between Sheriffs and the White House administration,” Donahue, a Republican who supports President Donald Trump, said in a statement Saturday. “The Sheriffs of this country feel betrayed.”

Donahue said [the department sought](#) no input for its listing, provided no indication of the criteria used for making the list, and offered no way to object to it.

A county spokesperson said Monday that Donahue was busy with meetings related to the list and was unavailable for comment. DHS has since removed the list from its website.

Donahue said members of the National Sheriffs’ Association and the DHS met Saturday to talk about the list. However, no political appointees “could explain who compiled, proofed and verified the list,” he said.

The list included the city of Boise, even though sanctuary cities are banned in Idaho. The list also included “Swinomish County” in Washington state, which may refer to the tribal community but is not a county.

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In an emailed statement Friday, a department spokesperson told The Idaho Statesman that the list was based on several factors, including places calling themselves sanctuary cities and legal protections for undocumented immigrants.

There is no clear definition of “sanctuary city,” local lawyers told the Statesman. Sanctuary cities [grew in popularity](#) before Trump’s first term and colloquially refer to areas where officials limit cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

For example, some “sanctuary” cities don’t comply with immigration detainers, which are requests from ICE for jails to notify agents of a person’s release or hold someone for agents to come get them.

Boise doesn’t have a jail, nor does it have jurisdiction over Ada County’s.

Idaho lawyers and an immigrant advocate told the Statesman that Boise does not appear to be violating federal immigration laws.

“I was very confused when I saw Boise was on the list. They do work with ICE,” said Estefanía Mondragón, executive director of PODER of Idaho, a local group dedicated to immigrant and Latino communities. “If anything, PODER thinks that Boise can do more for undocumented immigrants.”

The term “sanctuary” may even be a bit of a misnomer: Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials can do immigration enforcement anywhere in the country, according to Geoffrey Heeren, a University of Idaho law professor.

Idaho may have banned sanctuary cities, but neighboring states have embraced them. In Washington state, the Keep Washington Working Act instructs law enforcement to not honor [immigration detainers](#).

“This issue has become really politicized,” Heeren said. “The reality is that under federal law, there’s a spectrum in terms of the allowable involvement of state and local governments.”

*The Seattle Times staff contributed to this report.*

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