



ARIZONA SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

1910 W. JEFFERSON | PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85009
DAVID CLOUSE, NAVAJO COUNTY SHERIFF, PRESIDENT

October 9, 2026

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF ARIZONA

Regarding Public Safety, the Rule of Law, and Law Enforcement Responsibilities in Santa Cruz County

The Arizona Sheriffs' Association is deeply concerned by escalating public safety incidents associated with border barrier construction in Santa Cruz County, including reports of assaults, threats, property damage, and requests for law enforcement assistance that reportedly have not received a local response.

Federal and state law enforcement officials have reported to our Association that the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office declined requests for assistance involving alleged violence, threats against individuals, and property damage. They have also described masked participants from outside Arizona. These allegations merit documentation and appropriate investigation.

Santa Cruz County Sheriff David Hathaway has publicly described directing deputies not to respond to calls associated with the border-wall protests, except in cases involving violence. Yet law enforcement partners have reported repeated requests for assistance involving alleged violence, threats, and other criminal conduct that went unanswered. These reports raise serious concerns about public safety and the fulfillment of the Sheriff's responsibilities under Arizona law. The duty to preserve the peace and protect the public cannot be set aside simply because an incident involves federal operations or politically contentious circumstances. The right to peaceful protest must be protected, but credible reports of criminal activity demand appropriate law enforcement attention.

The Office of Sheriff and Its Responsibilities

Arizona's sheriffs are independently elected county officials who serve as the chief law enforcement officers of their respective counties. Their authority and responsibilities are established by the Arizona Constitution and state law. ASA respects that authority.

Under Arizona Revised Statutes § 11-441, sheriffs are charged with preserving the peace, enforcing the law, making arrests for public offenses, and preventing and suppressing disturbances and breaches of the peace. These responsibilities include the appropriate assessment and investigation of reported criminal activity within their jurisdiction, regardless of who reports it, who is involved, or whether the incident occurs near a federal operation.

A federal operation does not automatically displace a sheriff's independent responsibilities under Arizona law. Sheriffs must assess and investigate reports of potentially applicable state-law offenses.

Working Together to Protect Our Communities

As independently elected law enforcement officials with distinct authority under state law; sheriffs are not subordinate to federal law enforcement agencies. Our independence is compatible with, and strengthened by, professional cooperation among local, state, and federal partners.

Across Arizona, sheriffs coordinate with federal, state and local partners to preserve the peace, protect the public, and uphold the rule of law. These relationships depend on mutual respect, clear communication, and reliable assistance within each agency's lawful authority.

Our sheriffs also work closely with the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) and other state and local agencies. When an incident escalates or requires additional resources, prompt communication and coordinated assistance help protect the public.

Our Commitment to the Rule of Law

The Arizona Sheriffs' Association respects the independent authority of every elected county sheriff. However, when a county agency does not respond to a reported offense, DPS may exercise its own statutory law enforcement authority as circumstances warrant. That does not automatically transfer every county call to DPS; it underscores the need for clear coordination and an appropriate response to credible threats and reported crimes.

The member sheriffs of the Arizona Sheriffs' Association stand united in our commitment to protecting life, liberty, private property, and the rule of law.



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Should the Arizona Department of Public Safety request additional law enforcement assistance in response to the situation in Santa Cruz County, our member sheriffs stand ready to provide available resources and personnel, coordinated through DPS and appropriate law enforcement partners.

Our readiness to assist does not diminish the independent authority of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff or authorize an unrequested deployment. It reflects the shared commitment of law enforcement agencies to protect the people of Arizona.

We affirm the constitutional right to peaceful protest. We equally affirm that exercising this right does not provide immunity from laws protecting people, property, and public safety.

The Office of Sheriff carries an extraordinary public trust. That trust is preserved through integrity, impartial enforcement of the law, professional cooperation, and an unwavering commitment to the communities we serve.

The Arizona Sheriffs' Association will continue to support our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners in protecting our communities, preserving the peace, and upholding the rule of law.

About the Arizona Sheriffs' Association

The Arizona Sheriffs' Association is comprised of participating elected sheriffs from Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pinal, Yavapai, and Yuma counties.

The Association is committed to preserving the integrity and independence of the Office of Sheriff, advancing professional law enforcement leadership, strengthening collaboration among local, state, and federal partners, and protecting the safety and constitutional rights of the people of Arizona.

Santa Cruz County Sheriff David Hathaway is not a member of the Arizona Sheriffs' Association. His membership was terminated by a vote of the Association following matters concerning his membership standing. The Association does not speak on his behalf or represents the positions and actions of his office.

Our member sheriffs remain united in their commitment to upholding the rule of law, fulfilling their constitutional and statutory responsibilities, and serving the people of Arizona with integrity, professionalism, and accountability.

Sheriff David Clouse

President, Arizona Sheriffs' Association

Navajo County Sheriff

On behalf of the member sheriffs of the Arizona Sheriffs' Association