



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE

BRISTOL COUNTY SHERIFF

THOMAS M. HODGSON
SHERIFF

400 Faunce Corner Road
Dartmouth, MA 02747-1275
TEL. (508) 995-1311
FAX. (508) 995-7835
info@bcso-ma.org
www.bcso-ma.us

May 22, 2017

Dear Representative:

I am respectfully asking that you vote in opposition to House bills 3033 and 3034 for several reasons.

With regards to H.3033: An act relative to enforcing federal law:

Since 2011, our Immigration Detention Center, which was built **without any state money**, has generated more than \$45 million in **federal money**. The operating cost during the same period is \$7.9 million, leaving a net gain of \$37 million. The Legislature, in direct opposition of state law, sweeps the revenue from our account directly into the state's General Fund.

Furthermore, if Immigration and Customs Enforcement feels the illegal immigrant is dangerous enough to be detained, the federal government pays us \$99 immediately and each subsequent day that person is held.

My officers are paid on average \$30 an hour and the interviews take approximately one hour, so rather than this being a drain on scarce state dollars, it is in fact generating revenue from the federal government for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

If the truth be known, the cost to conduct an ICE interview pales in comparison to the cost of apprehending, processing, prosecuting and incarcerating a criminal illegal immigrant who was already in our custody but released because of this bill.

Passage of H.3033 is in direct conflict with the long established practice of state and local law enforcement serving on the various drug, gang, and terrorism taskforces of the FBI, DEA, and ATF. The purpose of state and local involvement is to provide our federal partners with street intelligence and other critical support necessary to maximize our collective resources to give us the best chance of keeping our citizens and legal residents safe in our communities.

Restricting our efforts to do the same with ICE is not in the best interests of our communities and suggests a motive that advances politics over public safety.

In summary, this public safety program does not waste scarce state dollars, but rather generates revenue. It does not create a deportation force that patrols neighborhoods looking for anyone who may look like an illegal immigrant. An illegal immigrant must be arrested by local or state police and brought to jail for this program to have an impact.

With regards to H.3034: An act limiting the use of prison labor:

First and foremost, the costs associated with the transportation, housing and meals for our officer and volunteer inmates must be supported by federal money from FEMA or other federal agencies.

Also, these inmate volunteers would be involved in infrastructure projects or natural disaster recovery in communities where the effort requires outside resources and in instances when it does not compete with job opportunities for unemployed Americans.

Blocking Project N.I.C.E. (National Inmate Community Endeavors) from becoming reality denies a valuable service to taxpayers that can help after disasters and complete major infrastructure projects to increase their quality of life.

Furthermore, at a time where the Legislature is looking for ways to reduce recidivism, it only makes sense that inmates be permitted to enjoy the benefits of preparing for successful re-entry by developing a work ethic, realizing a sense of self-confidence and achievement, and have something very attractive to put on a resume as we set them on a trajectory of employment upon release.

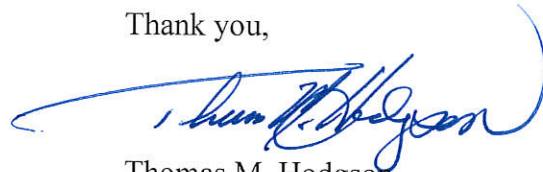
In America, when natural disasters or a major infrastructure project is bigger than a community or a region can handle, we come together as a nation and unite around a common cause to achieve something great. Project N.I.C.E. is a valuable initiative that benefits the taxpayers financially, benefits the volunteer inmates by giving them skills and experience, , and uses creative government solutions to meet existing challenges.

An example that immediately comes to mind involves a county in California that was dealing with an inordinate amount of wildfires. The Sheriff trained inmate volunteers to combat the fires and many of them, upon release, were hired as fulltime firefighters.

There are untold benefits to Project N.I.C.E. for the volunteer inmates and for the communities in need.

I ask that you vote unfavorably upon H.3033 and H.3034. Please feel free to contact me with any questions that I may address as you deliberate.

Thank you,



Thomas M. Hodgson
Sheriff

TMH/bnc