

Quarterly Newsletter

Illinois State Crime Stoppers Association

First Quarter 2026



A Message from the President

January 20, 2026

Greetings Fellow Crime Stoppers,

I must begin the Year by asking each program to please keep the ISCSA in mind when setting your 2026 budget. The ISCSA does not charge dues; we simply ask for a volunteer donation to complete our mission and achieve our goals. So, what is our mission and what are our goals for the year ahead?

- 1.) To provide leadership through the use of an annual state conference, continuing education, resources, statistics, and mentoring, as well as maintaining, improving, and expanding training programs.

With that said, I hope you are planning on joining us in Litchfield for this year's training conference. Some of the topics we are planning include: Fundraising, Marketing, Grant Writing, and combating Retail Crime. We have also purchased a 'zoom account' to offer quarterly trainings and open-up our State Meetings to the general membership.

- 2.) To promote the creation of new Crime Stoppers programs throughout the State and assist existing Programs.

We have lost seventeen programs over two years. We are all affected when we lose our neighbor's Programs. It is our goal to assist in reinstating the programs we lost, many collar counties of Chicago, and develop new programs not covered. This would be the Illinois side of the Mississippi River and downstate. This will require travel expenses. I remind you that the ISCSA consists of all **volunteers**.

- 3.) To communicate through networking and publication and to provide representation at the local, state, national, and international levels.

The SAFE T Act has financially negatively affected every program in Illinois. We need your statistics to validate our success with legislators and your examples of how this has affected your local program. At the national level, we hope to meet with the Treasury Department to raise our \$1000 limit on rewards.

These are the plans of the ISCSA in 2026. I hope you can help us by donating a few dollars to accomplish these hefty goals.

Please contact me anytime with your questions, concerns, and comments.

Hope to see you all in Litchfield!

Loren Hamilton
Illinois State Crime Stoppers
President





A Reminder from the ISCSA President!!

IS THIS LISTED IN YOUR BYLAWS OR MOP?

Crime Stoppers programs usually set clear rules about **who is not eligible** to receive a cash reward, even if they provide information. While the exact details can vary by city or state, the most common exclusions are:

- **Law enforcement officers** or employees of police departments, sheriff's offices, or prosecutors' offices.
- **Crime Stoppers staff, board members, or volunteers** (to prevent conflicts of interest).
- **Perpetrators or accomplices** of the crime in question.
- **Family members of law enforcement officers or Crime Stoppers staff/board** (in some programs).
- **Anyone under legal restriction** (such as those prohibited from receiving funds under certain laws).

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You're Invited!

IL State Crime Stoppers Assoc

39th Annual Training Meeting Conference

Proudly brought to you by

Macoupin Montgomery Counties

Crime Stoppers



SAVE THE DATE

4/30-5/02 ('26)

HOLIDAY INN LITCHFIELD

Stay tuned for more details!

To Register click the link below or visit: Illinoiscrimestoppers.org

[Illinois State Crime Stoppers Association Annual Training Conference](#)

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Department of Homeland Security/ICE

Recently, the topic of the Department of Homeland Security (ICE) has come up. If programs receive a tip regarding an illegal immigrant, what do we do?

It's the elephant in the room question. Crime Stoppers Legal Director Retired Judge Richard Carter had this to say:

"The tips on illegal immigrants should be forwarded to ICE. Crime Stoppers organizations operate under the Constitution of the United States of America. Crime Stoppers is not a Sanctuary Program for federal felons."

With that said, here is the Link for the ICE Tip Sheet: www.ice.gov/webform/ice-tip-form. It's your program's decision if any tips are forwarded or not.

However, it is the recommendation of the State Board to abide by Judge Carter's Legal opinion



SAVE THE DATE

Crime Stoppers USA Annual conference will be held September 17-20 at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, VA (Washington DC)

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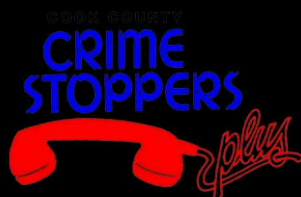
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Cook County Crime Stoppers

Submitted by: Paul Rutherford



COOK COUNTY CRIME STOPPERS



COOK COUNTY CRIME STOPPERS ENDS 2025 STRONG, AS ALWAYS

This year, we completed 130 of 140 requested cases by responding directly to crime scenes and distributing incident-specific flyers to the community. These cases included mass shootings, homicides, cold-case homicides, fatal hit-and-runs, and aggravated robberies.

In addition to these efforts, our work does not reflect the numerous tips received via phone calls and emails that were vetted and forwarded to law enforcement agencies.

As we enter 2026, we look forward to continuing our strong partnerships with federal, state, and local law enforcement, remaining committed to supporting public safety across Chicagoland and Cook County.

NEW CHAIRMAN & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Cook County Crime Stoppers is proud to announce the appointment of Paul Rutherford as Executive Director and Chairman of the Board of Directors. With a steadfast commitment to public safety and strong community partnerships, Paul brings proven leadership to further the organization's mission of supporting law enforcement and empowering the public to help solve and prevent crime.

Paul joined Cook County Crime Stoppers in 2005 after meeting Chairman George McDade following the tragic loss of his younger brother in December 2004. With the assistance of Cook County Crime Stoppers, the Cicero Police Department successfully solved his brother's case, an experience that inspired Paul's long-standing dedication to the organization. For more than 20 years, Paul worked side by side with George McDade, playing an instrumental role in helping solve numerous homicide cases.

With a strong background in legal, law enforcement, and investigations, Paul currently serves as a Financial Fraud Analyst in the Special Investigations Unit of an international law firm. He holds two bachelor's degrees, an MBA, and is a Certified Fraud Examiner. In addition, Paul is frequently called upon to teach investigative tactics at a local college, where he provides students the opportunity to volunteer with Crime Stoppers and gain hands-on experience working on real-life unsolved homicide cases alongside detectives.

While Paul is no stranger to Cook County Crime Stoppers, his leadership marks a new chapter for the organization as he guides it to the next level, serving the second-largest county in the nation with renewed vision, purpose, and impact.

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COOK COUNTY MEETS HOUSTON (TEXAS) CRIME STOPPERS



Paul Rutherford recently met with Houston Crime Stoppers to exchange ideas and gather valuable insight on successful fundraising strategies, grant opportunities, and best practices for organizational growth. This collaborative effort reflects Cook County Crime Stoppers' commitment to learning from peer organizations and strengthening its capacity to better serve the community and support law enforcement.

40TH ANNUAL AWARD DINNER

On November 21, 2025, Cook County Crime Stoppers proudly hosted its 40th Annual Awards Dinner at the Mayfield Banquet Hall in Chicago. The event welcomed over 500 attendees and recognized more than 280 award recipients across 25 distinct groups and award categories, honoring exceptional service and dedication to public safety.

Many of the honorees were recognized for their vital roles on federal, state, county, and municipal task forces, underscoring the collaborative partnerships that strengthen public safety throughout Cook County. The evening also featured a keynote address from newly elected Cook County State's Attorney Eileen O'Neill Burke. Additionally, Marc Maton, retired Chief of the Lemont Police Department and President of the Police Chiefs of Illinois Association, was presented with this year's Distinguished Service Award.



Honoring 30 Years of Service: George McDade

George McDade was recently honored for his remarkable 30 years of dedicated service as Chairman of Cook County Crime Stoppers. Throughout his tenure, George's steadfast leadership and unwavering commitment to public safety have had a lasting impact on communities across Cook County.

In recognition of his outstanding contributions, the City of Chicago formally honored George with a Resolution passed by the Chicago City Council. The Resolution was presented by Alderwoman Silvana Tabares, acknowledging his decades of service and leadership.

Additionally, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker signed and issued a Resolution on behalf of the State of Illinois, further recognizing George McDade's extraordinary dedication and the enduring legacy he has built in support of crime prevention and community safety.



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Cook County Crime Stoppers

Anita Alvarez Distinguished Prosecutor Award



The Anita Alvarez Distinguished Prosecutor Award honors prosecutors who exemplify integrity, courage, and an unwavering commitment to justice, values embodied by former Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez. This year, the award was presented to three exceptional prosecutors whose dedication and professionalism delivered justice in one of the most heartbreaking cases in Cook County history.

Danny Hanichak, Stephanie Gersch, and Franka D'Antignac were recognized for their extraordinary work leading to the conviction of Crosetti Brand on all 17 counts for the murder of 11-year-old Jayden Perkins and the brutal attack on his mother, Laterra Smith. Throughout a difficult and emotionally charged trial, they demonstrated exceptional legal skill, compassion, and resolve, ensuring accountability and honoring the courage of Jayden and his family.

Their work reflects the very highest standards of the justice system and serves as a powerful reminder of the impact dedicated prosecutors have on victims, families, and the community.

Story:

<https://www.cookcountystatesattorney.org/news/crosetti-brand-convicted-stabbing-pregnant-woman-and-killing-her-son>

LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are the foundation of success. We extend our sincere gratitude to our law enforcement leaders for their continued support of Cook County Crime Stoppers and for allowing us to work alongside them in bringing justice to victims and their families.



Standing from left to right: Chief of Cook County Sheriff Police **Arthur Jackson**, Cook County Crime Stoppers Vice Chairman **Martin Zamora**, Cook County Crime Stoppers Chairman **Paul Rutherford**, Special Agent in Charge of ATF **Christopher Amon**, Chief of Detectives Chicago Police Department **Antoinette Uristti**, Retire Chief of Lamont Police **Marc Maton**, Cicero Police Department Superintendent **Thomas Boyle**, WGN Reporter and Mistress of Ceremonies **Angelica Sanchez**, Special Agent in Charge of DHS Investigation **Matthew J. Scarpino**, Special Agent in Charge of FBI **Lucas Rothaar**, Special Agent in Charge of DEA **Shane Catone** and Cook County Crime Stoppers Secretary **Jesse Gonzalez** (Retire Detective, Chicago Police Department).

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Cook County Crime Stoppers

CHICAGO POLICE FOUNDATION TRUE BLUE GALA

The Chicago Police Foundation invited Cook County Crime Stoppers to be its guest at the annual True-Blue Gala, an evening dedicated to honoring and supporting the men and women of the Chicago Police Department. The invitation underscores the strong partnership between the Foundation and Crime Stoppers and their shared commitment to public safety and community engagement.



TOY GIVEAWAY WITH CHICAGO POLICE DETECTIVES

Cook County Crime Stoppers partnered with the Chicago Police Bureau of Detectives to bring holiday cheer to families impacted by violence, distributing more than 500 toys to the children of crime victims. This meaningful outreach underscored a shared commitment to compassion, community support, and standing with families during the holiday season.



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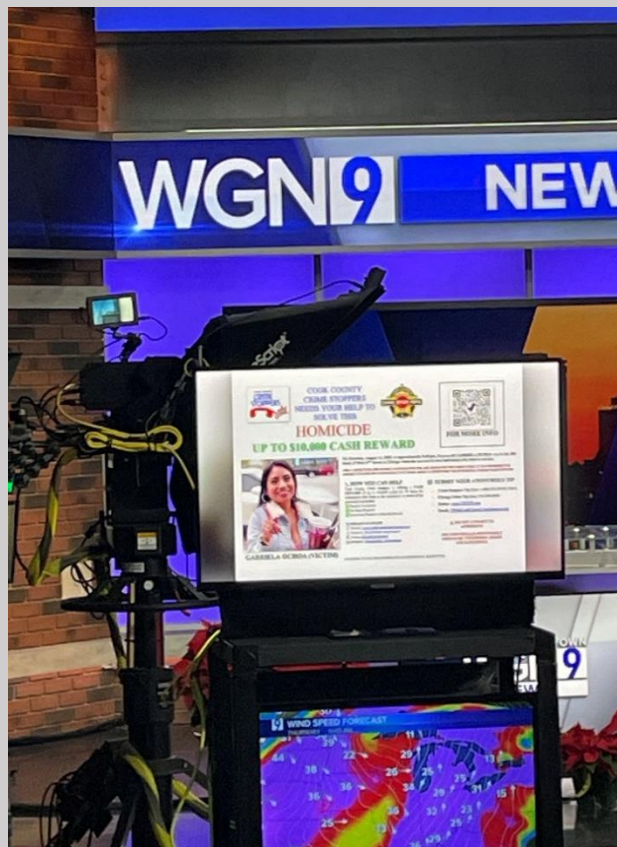


Cook County Crime Stoppers

CRIME PREVENTION SEGMENT

Cook County Crime Stoppers proudly welcomes its newest team member, Jesse Gonzalez, Director of Case Review and former Chicago Police Detective. Jesse recently shared important crime prevention tips, offering guidance on how to stay safe when buying or selling items through online marketplaces and apps such as Facebook Marketplace. His expertise helps raise community awareness and empowers residents to protect themselves while conducting online transactions.

Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6KdMFUdRSA>



A Special Thanks to Paul Rutherford of Cook County Crime Stoppers, Loren Hamilton, President of the ISCSA, and Ernie Slottag, Board Member of Crime Stoppers of Sangamon and Menard Counties, for being major contributors to the 2026 First Quarter Newsletter! It's a great way to offer ideas, spur involvement, and spread the awesome work you do.

Next Newsletter Deadline is April 30, 2026!

We welcome your input! We want to hear your successes, struggles, questions and celebrations! Email your content to: basketbude@aol.com.



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Crime Stoppers of Sangamon and Menard Counties



The Committee



The Center



Participants

Trivia Night

Crime Stoppers of Sangamon and Menard Counties held its 15th Annual Trivia Night in Springfield's Convention Center on January 31st. 124 teams were registered for the event which has become Illinois' largest live trivia event to fill a single room. Several months of preparation went into making it a huge success. Not only did we feature a 50-50 contest where the winner took home over \$3,000, but we held a ten-for-ten raffle where gift packages were won by ten lucky winners. Trivia Workshop provided the questions which were quite challenging. Even so, two teams tied for first place missing only one question out of a hundred. A tie breaker determined the winner. A good time was had by all.

Submitted by: Ernie Slottag

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Crime Stoppers of Morgan, Scott & Cass Counties

Submitted by: Loren Hamilton

Crime Stoppers of Morgan, Scott & Cass Counties is proud to announce that our program has surpassed the Million Dollar Mark in Property Recovered & Illegal Drugs Seized since our inception in 1985.

\$1, 003, 544 has been recovered in our forty year existence, which averages over \$25,000 for each year!

Our program began humbly as Crime Stoppers of Jacksonville in 1985 before including all of Morgan & Scott counties a few years later. More recently, Cass County has been added to our coverage area.

We have been focused on combating illegal drug activity. We now offer an enhanced reward if Methamphetamine is found on the suspect at the time of arrest. If an anonymous tip is received, that leads to that arrest.

Anyone with information concerning crime within the three-county area and/or the location of a Wanted Person can submit a tip online by visiting our Facebook page and clicking the 'Contact Us' button on the home page, or by visiting our website www.morganscottcrimestoppers.com. **And of course, by calling our non-recorded line at 217-243-7300 twenty-four hours a day.**

**Congratulations on
the
ONE MILLION
DOLLAR
Milestone!!**



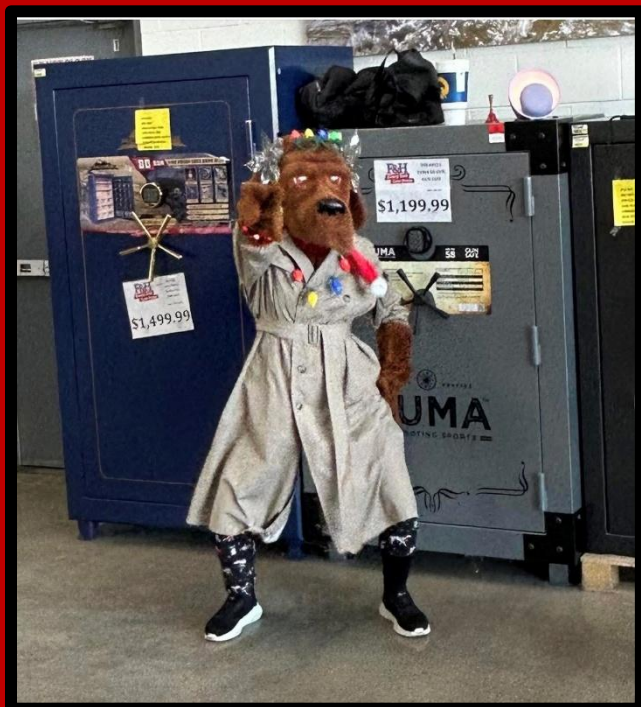
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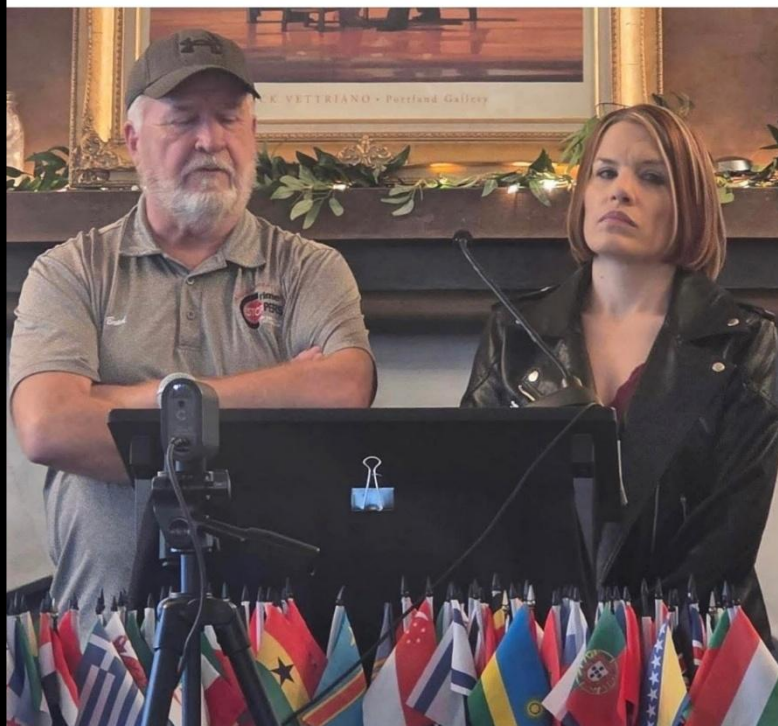


Crime Stoppers of Morgan, Scott & Cass Counties



McGruff was getting his "Groove" on for December's Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign, representing Crime Stoppers of Morgan, Scott & Cass Counties.

Crime Stoppers Vice President Jessica Tvrdik-Fortin and Board Member Brad Fellhauer were recent guests of the Jacksonville Kiwanis, where they spoke about our program. Next month, they will be the guest of the Ambucs. If your group would like to learn how Crime Stoppers work, please contact us!



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Legislative Update

Submitted by: Ernie Slottag



Top Democrats say they would consider small changes to SAFE-T Act

Jerry Nowicki & Ben Szalinski

Capitol News Illinois

Updated Jan. 14, 2026, 1:09 p.m. CT

- Top Illinois Democrats are open to making targeted changes to the state's SAFE-T Act.
- A judicial report on the law's impact is expected to be released and will inform any potential legislative tweaks.
- Republicans are pushing for more specific changes, such as expanding the list of detainable offenses.

SPRINGFIELD — Some of Illinois' top Democrats say they're open to considering targeted changes to Illinois' controversial SAFE-T Act this spring if a forthcoming judicial report says they're needed.

Both Gov. JB Pritzker and House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, D-Hillside, say the changes — if ultimately deemed necessary — would be narrow despite Republicans' desire to see the law drastically overhauled. Welch said he is awaiting a report on the law that is still being crafted by Cook County's top judge.

State lawmakers passed the SAFE-T Act in January 2021 as part of a series of initiatives led by the legislative Black Caucus in response to civil unrest and racial justice conversations after the 2020 murder of George Floyd. The most controversial part of the law is the Pretrial Fairness Act, which eliminated cash bail.

Welch and Pritzker noted that it is routine for state lawmakers to review and tweak any law on the books. The sweeping criminal justice reform law that passed in 2021 has already been subject to multiple amendments.

"After a couple of years of data, you know, sometimes you do trailer legislation," Welch told Capitol News Illinois. "Is this the time to do that? It may be, but there may not be anything to do at all."

Elimination of cash bail

The Pretrial Fairness Act takes wealth out of the equation as judges determine whether an individual charged with a crime is incarcerated while awaiting trial. While officers are directed to cite and release low-level nonviolent offenders rather than arrest them, violent or more serious crimes can still end in arrest and potential detention pending trial.

The new system allows state's attorneys to petition for pretrial detention, and judges can determine whether to grant it based on an offender's risk of reoffending or fleeing prosecution.

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Legislative Update, Cont.

The law also instructs courts to take the “least restrictive” means of ensuring a person’s appearance in court, meaning nonviolent offenders often end up on electronic monitoring as opposed to awaiting trial from a jail cell. Proponents note that crime is down since the SAFE-T Act’s implementation, as is the state’s jail population.

“I think the SAFE-T Act is working,” Sen. Elgie Sims, a Chicago Democrat who led the law through the Senate, told Capitol News Illinois. “Is it perfect? No, no law is ever perfect. But again, I think we’ve got data that shows that communities are more safe because the SAFE-T Act is in place.”

An [October report](#) by the Loyola University Center for Criminal Justice found monthly pretrial jail populations had fallen 7% statewide since the PFA went into effect, but pretrial supervision populations had risen 33% during the same period. In Cook County, jail populations had increased by about 2% despite an initial drop after the PFA became law.

The total statewide population of people awaiting trial on either electronic monitoring or in a jail cell has actually grown 17% since the law took effect, according to the October data.

Renewed scrutiny

Opponents of the law during its passage had called on lawmakers to grant judges greater discretion and to limit the number of circumstances where the law prohibits them from ordering detention. Since the law’s implementation, its harshest critics have frequently pointed to instances of individuals who reoffend, often in cases where a judge has denied a prosecutor’s request for pretrial detention.

One recent event that’s put renewed scrutiny on the law involves 26-year-old Bethany MaGee, who was lit on fire on an “L” train in Chicago in November. Prosecutors said Lawrence Reed, the man [charged](#) with terrorism and arson in connection with the case, has been arrested 72 times over the last 30 years, [Block Club Chicago reported](#). He’s been convicted 15 times, including for arson in 2020 after lighting a fire outside the Thompson Center, the former state office building in Chicago.

At the time of the alleged attack on MaGee, Reed was out on electronic monitoring. State’s attorneys had sought his detention in August as a threat to public safety after he allegedly physically assaulted a nurse at a Berwyn hospital. [WGN reported](#) that the Cook County judge denied prosecutors’ request despite the evidence.

Illinois law requires individuals on electronic monitoring to wear ankle monitors but entitles them to two days of free movement, or about two eight-hour periods, per week.

Though some have blamed the SAFE-T Act for Reed’s “L” train crime, Sims argued the case shows why the state needs to be investing more in mental health resources.

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Legislative Update, Cont.

Possible changes

The state's Democratic leaders didn't go into specifics about what changes, if any, they're currently considering.

"I think everybody is open to listening to what changes might be made," Pritzker said at a November news conference following the "L" incident.

But like Welch, Pritzker added that changing laws is a routine part of the legislative process. The General Assembly has also amended parts of the SAFE-T Act since it was first passed, particularly as it pertained to offenses that are "non-detainable."

Before the General Assembly makes any changes, Welch said he wants to see a report from Cook County Chief Judge Charles Beach's office that is on track to be released at the end of January.

"If the chief judge comes to me and has some ideas, I've told him I'm going to be all ears because our goal is always to try to make things better," Welch said.

Welch added it's possible the changes don't have to come from the General Assembly and can be made administratively by the courts.

Welch said he also plans to have his public safety working group — a select group of House Democrats that discusses issues behind closed doors — consider possible changes to the law. Sims said he also has not identified any specific changes.

"I'm always open to anything that's going to improve public safety and make people in our communities more safe and make sure our criminal legal system is more just," Sims said.

GOP proposals

Republicans have more specific ideas about how the SAFE-T Act should be amended.

House Republican Leader Tony McCombie, R-Savanna, acknowledged in an interview with Capitol News Illinois that her party's minority status in Springfield means her caucus' focus has to be on making changes to improve the law rather than gutting it altogether, as many Republicans have called for.

"We have quite a few fixes that we hope will be embraced," she said. "I think to say, you know, let's support the repeal of the SAFE-T Act, we know ... that ship sailed, so let's just put the fixes in that can still make this a workable policy."

Ideas proposed by Republicans include making all felonies eligible for detention rather than violent felonies, allowing a person's pretrial release to be revoked if they commit any new crime while released, eliminating language that allows people on pretrial home confinement free movement, and creating a presumption that a person should be detained when they are charged with a crime against a minor.

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Email Address for Submissions

Newsletter

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Don't forget to send pictures



We would love to know what is happening with your Crime Stopper's Program. Next Newsletter Deadline **April 30, 2026! Send your success stories, articles, fundraising ideas to basketbude@aol.com**



RYDER

The reason this Newsletter is a week late!!

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We Want You!!!

Want to help make a difference at the State level?

Our board is accepting applications to become a director on our board. An application can be downloaded from this link.

<http://www.illinoiscrimestoppers.org/forms/2010%20ISCA%20Board%20of%20Directors%20app.pdf>

A completed application or any questions can be emailed to Nominations Chair, Jo Cramer at howdyocs@gmail.com

Currently we have openings for Civilian Board Members from a Certified Crime Stoppers Program, and Law Enforcement Openings for active or retired Law Enforcement Officers from a Certified Crime Stoppers program.



And Your Stats, Too!!!

Send Us Your Stats

We Need Your Stats! Login to the state website and update your stats!

Codes Issued- This is the collective number of tips you receive (Phone, Web, Text, App)

Cases Solved- This is actual number of different cases solved with information provided by a Crime Stopper tip only or the recovery of property and or illegal drugs with information from a Crime Stopper tip. Example- One Residential Burglary =1 Cases Solved, Five Car Burglaries solved with one arrest through a CS tip =5 cases solved.

NOTE: FTA and Probation Warrants should NOT be counted in this column. That case has previously been solved weather through a CS tip or not.

Arrests Made- This is for arrests made either from a case solved and or a Warrant/Probation arrest.

Again same as above; arrests means number of actual people arrested. The same person arrested for five cases would only count as 1 arrest, not 5.

Property Recovered- Is the 4 values of the stolen items and or street value of the drugs recovered with information received from a CS tip. Here as in Arrests and cases solved; we only want numbers when a CS tip was used. We do NOT want the total number of cases/arrests your Law Agencies make. Only the ones where a CS tip was used.

Rewards Paid- This is the Total Amount of Reward approved, weather it was picked up or not. Doesn't matter, only that it was awarded.

Final Reminder –These are quarterly numbers only, they are NOT cumulative. This DOES differ from Crime Stoppers USA. They do ask for Cumulative numbers, we at the State Board do NOT

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