



South Roxana Police Chief Bob Coles Releases Thoughts On HB 3653

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
February 21 2021 11:29 AM



SOUTH ROXANA - South Roxana Police Chief Bob Coles released his thoughts on HB 3653 that was passed in the Illinois House and Senate and is now waiting to be signed by Governor Pritzker.

HB 3653 is a criminal justice and police reforms bill that would mean the end of cash bail in Illinois and the introduction of new "police accountability" protocols.

Part of the "significant changes" are new police training policies, including crisis intervention and de-escalation tactics, police accountability, transparency in law enforcement and the rights of detainees and prisoners

Police Departments, Unions, States Attorneys, and a lot of Illinois residents have spoken against this new bill across Illinois.

Chief Coles statements about HB 3653 are below:

“My intent of these comments is not designed to be a pro-law enforcement movement but to speak to the citizens and communities affected by this disastrous legislation of HB 3653. As a chief of police with over twenty-three years of experience, it appears the approach to law enforcement by Chicago legislators is being viewed with such a narrow lens they have ignored the disastrous effects this will have on communities and the increased victimization which will occur across our state,” Coles said.

“Do not be confused by our legislators who have simply replaced the phrase of “Defund the police department” with the word “Reform.” This egregious legislation was written with such malice and disdain for law enforcement our community safety is considered accepted collateral damage of such bias-based legislation.

“I wrote to every member of our house legislators who voted yes on HB3653, along with the governor and his administrative staff.

“Out of over nearly a hundred letters sent out asking our legislators how our communities can remain safe, I have only received two responses. One reply from a Chicago representative defied logic. The other response was a legislator claiming he voted yes for the legislation but did not know what was in the bill he voted on.

“I want to be clear; I do not know of any law enforcement officer who did not feel it was a tragedy of justice to what occurred to Mr. Floyd or agreed with the actions of the Minneapolis Police Officers. The assumption police officers all stand behind each other regardless of the situation is simply a false narrative our profession does not support. Even this tragic but isolated incident overshadows the thousands of positive daily

interactions of law enforcement. This is being used as fuel to create injustices throughout our state to not only law enforcement but the communities we serve.”

Coles said below are a few examples for people to understand how these new laws will affect their life.

1. "If someone kills their significant other in a domestic violence situation, the person cannot be held in jail and must be allowed to walk free on the streets because the person does not pose a danger to the community according to our new laws. Individuals are not lodged in jail because of a weak case, wanting a plea deal, or race/ethnicity of the person. People are lodged in jail because of the inherent danger they pose to the community."
2. "Body Cameras appear as a hot topic of conversation. The legislation mandates body cameras for each officer. I fully support this law, but it provides no funding to comply with the unfunded mandate. It is not just the cost of the cameras, but you must factor in computers, data storage, programs to blur out juveniles' faces, or other redactions as mandated by law."

"Did you know with this new legislation created in Chicago, if someone robs a store and flees from the police in a high-speed pursuit, it is considered less of a crime than an officer who did not wear a body camera," Cole said. "For those questioning the above statement, that is correct officers will become felons if they are not wearing a body camera."

3. "The final example I would like to share would be for our business owners. If someone is at your business and creates a disturbance under the new law, the police department can not make this person leave your establishment. So, the police will respond and notice this person being unruly or causing a disruption to your business, but our new laws prohibit the officer from acting and removing this subject from your property."

“I do not understand, nor has it been explained to me, with all the discussion of de-escalation, how the crime ridden communities are not teaching de-escalation methods to anyone who is involved in the escalation of a criminal complaint through noncompliance or violent behavior towards law enforcement. A common denominator in most of the tragic incidents with law enforcement involves the resisting of arrest or escalation by the suspect.”

“The law I know is not biased or prejudice. A murder is still considered a murder regardless of a person’s nationality, gender, race, or religious affiliation.”

Coles said law enforcement is being used as a scapegoat for societal issues the police themselves do not govern. These issues and social injustices citizens are concerned about and rightfully so are not police issues but a cultural crisis affecting every race, gender, and community.

"The lack of employment, single parents raising children, school dropouts, teenage birth, felons with guns, drug addiction, mental health, and lack of assistance in providing small business loans to communities are all issues that contribute to high crime rate, not the presence of police responding to criminal acts which jeopardize the safety of our community. Police do not sentence defendants to prison or control funding to community programs.

"If legislators genuinely want reform, then support the difficult job law enforcement faces by providing funding for better training, education, less-lethal technology, and retention of officers for the inherent dangers they face and split-second life and death decisions each officer must go through.

"We should be focused on allocating more money for mental illness, substance abuse, co-op work programs, and inner-city funding to provide hope of a better tomorrow for everyone.

"I hope our great citizens of this state do not succumb to the bias and prejudice certain legislators are trying to lead them into because obviously the views and outtakes are beyond the approach of any common sense measure needed to protect everyone from injustice. At the end of the day, we are more than officers, we are human beings like yourself. I appreciate anyone's compassion and support to bring change to communities, but I am confident this legislation is misguided and misplaced at best."