

Jersey Sheriff Releases Statement On New IL Gun Ban

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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JERSEYVILLE - Jersey County Sheriff Nicholas Manns has joined a growing number of local sheriffs who say their departments will not enforce the recently-passed Illinois ban on certain firearms and magazines, also known as HB 5471. Manns recently released a statement outlining his department's approach to the new law.

“As your Sheriff and as a law enforcement officer, I am sworn to protect Jersey County by enforcing the law AND protecting your Constitutional rights,” Manns said in the letter. “Generally, those two obligations are one and the same. Unfortunately, in this instance, they are not.”

Manns said he believes many provisions of HB 5471 are unconstitutional and likely won’t hold up in the Supreme Court. He sees the current situation as an opportunity to enforce what he believes is right, while not enforcing what he believes is wrong.

“When I look at our history, I often wonder how things would be different if past law enforcement officers would have used their discretion in enforcing laws that seemed wrong and were ultimately determined to be unconstitutional,” he said. “I feel that I am currently in such a place.”

As the chief law enforcement officer and custodian of the jail in Jersey County, Manns said those working in the Sheriff’s Office will use their “lawful discretion” in enforcing HB 5471 until the courts have weighed in - but they will prosecute all other gun-related laws as usual.

“For now, when it comes to law-abiding citizens and lawful gun owners, we will not be checking for registration of your firearms with the State, nor will we be arresting otherwise law-abiding citizens solely with non-compliance of this Act or housing such citizens in our jail,” he said. “For those who would otherwise violate our laws or unlawfully possess firearms, we will continue to consider all applicable charges in order to protect Jersey County.”

Manns cited the Supreme Court’s history of upholding Second Amendment rights, especially in cases of self-defense, but also acknowledged the public’s desire to find solutions to gun violence.

“While I am not a legislator or attorney, I know that throughout our history, the U.S. Supreme Court has recognized an individual’s right to keep and bear Arms as a fundamental right protected by the Second Amendment of our Constitution,” Manns said. “I understand there are many facets of this issue. In my career, I have witnessed firsthand the devastation caused by gun violence on far too many occasions. And I believe most of our citizens desire to find a viable solution (or measures) to stop the senseless violence and loss of lives.”

Before he released this statement, Manns met with local law enforcement leaders to discuss his thoughts and approach to enforcing the new law. He said Jerseyville Chief of Police Brad Blackorby, Grafton Chief of Police Eric Spanton, and Elsah Chief of Police Larry Mead all agree with this approach, as does State’s Attorney Ben Goetten.

