

Haine, Connor Statement on Illinois Supreme Court Ruling on SAFE-T Act

by Submitted by Tom Haine/Jeff Connor's Office
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EDWARDSVILLE — The following statement regarding the Illinois Supreme Court’s opinion on the SAFE-T Act is attributable to Madison County State’s Attorney Tom Haine and Sheriff Jeff Connor:

“We are disappointed by the Supreme Court’s decision, and respectfully disagree with it. But our constitutional structure gives our Illinois Supreme Court the final say in interpreting our State Constitution, and we will continue to uphold and follow its decisions. Thankfully, due to diligent work over the past months and years, Madison County will be prepared for the Sept. 18, 2023 implementation ordered by the court, and will be coordinating the local law enforcement community toward that task in the weeks

ahead. While rules may change, the commitment of our offices will not: We will always fight for victims of crime and strive to protect our community from lawbreakers.”

“We are proud at least that the bipartisan litigation against the SAFE-T Act has given us nine more months to prepare, prevented the disastrous roll-out that was being rushed forward last winter, and played a role in instigating last December’s last-minute major amendment to the SAFE-T Act. This Amendment removed some of the most egregious aspects of the original SAFE-T Act and stopped its retroactive application, which would have wreaked havoc in our criminal justice system and swung our jail doors open wide. We can all be very glad that was avoided, and sincerely thank all those who are working hard to make continual improvements to this and other laws governing our criminal justice system in Illinois.”

“We remain convinced that the SAFE-T Act is ill-conceived legislation that will take discretion and tools away from our local judges, impose serious unfunded burdens on local prosecutors, delay justice for victims of crime, and ultimately make our neighborhoods less safe. Obviously, its supporters disagree with that assessment. Now that the Supreme Court has allowed this law to go forward as designed, we will all know soon enough, and time will tell who is right or wrong. Frankly, we hope to be proven wrong. We hope that years from now the facts show that the SAFE-T Act’s changes have made us all more safe and secure and have not empowered criminals. But we doubt it.

"And if negative impacts from the SAFE-T Act’s revolutionary changes become undeniable in communities across this state over the coming years, we would hope the General Assembly and Governor will reverse course and give judges and prosecutors back the tools that this law stripped away from them. Public safety is too important.”

Haine, Connor, and the previous Sheriff John Lakin, were part of a bipartisan group of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs from over 60 Illinois counties who sued Gov. J.B. Pritzker to block implementation of the controversial SAFE-T Act. On Dec. 28, 2022, Circuit Judge Thomas Cunnington ruled in their favor, finding that the elimination of cash bail is unconstitutional.

The judge ruled that “the appropriateness of bail rests with the authority of the court and may not be determined by legislative fiat.” Pritzker appealed the judge’s ruling to the Illinois Supreme Court, which has overturned the Circuit Court and ordered that the SAFE-T Act be implemented on Sept. 18, 2023.