

Attorney General Raoul Releases Preliminary Report On Illinois Law Enforcement Compliance With Way Forward Act

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CHCAGO - Attorney General Kwame Raoul today released preliminary statistics detailing compliance by Illinois law enforcement agencies with the first year of

reporting requirements contained in the Way Forward Act. According to the initial data compiled by Raoul's Civil Rights Bureau, law enforcement agencies around Illinois overwhelmingly reported to the Attorney General's office their compliance with two state laws designed to build trust between police departments and immigrant communities.

The Way Forward Act requires law enforcement agencies to report to the Attorney General's office annually regarding the Illinois TRUST Act and the Voices of Immigrant Communities Empowering Survivors (VOICES) Act. Both were enacted to increase trust and cooperation between immigrant communities and police departments largely by prohibiting law enforcement agencies from participating in federal immigration enforcement, and by creating procedural requirements to support immigrants who have been victims of violent crime or human trafficking.

"State laws protecting the rights of immigrant communities are effective only if they are properly understood and enforced by law enforcement," Raoul said. "My office's Civil Rights Bureau worked diligently to ensure that law enforcement agencies and community organizations alike understand the TRUST Act and the VOICES Act and why compliance with these vitally-important public safety laws will build safer communities for all who live in Illinois."

The Way Forward Act was signed into law in 2021 and empowers Raoul's office to enforce compliance and investigate possible violations of the TRUST Act and the VOICES Act, making the reporting requirements vital to ensuring the laws are being followed and immigrant communities are protected. Law enforcement agencies' first annual reports, for the 2022 calendar year, were due March 1, 2023.

Attorney General Raoul's preliminary findings for calendar year 2022, which are [available online](#), show 838 Illinois law enforcement agencies submitted compliance reports, including 100 of Illinois' 102 county sheriffs' departments. Law enforcement agencies reported receiving a total of 2,199 U-visa or T-visa certification requests and granting 1,402 requests, an approval rate of nearly 64%. Additionally, 140 police departments received at least one U-visa or T-visa certification request.

U-visa and T-visa certification requests offer an important opportunity for police departments to build trust with local immigrant communities and reinforce the importance of reporting and assisting in the investigation and prosecution of criminal activity. Although most U-visa and T-visa certification requests were granted, the data shows room for improvement in the timeliness and processes through which some law enforcement agencies handle these requests.

Over the past year, Raoul's Civil Rights Bureau identified some law enforcement agencies that were unfamiliar with the U-visa and T-visa certification process as well as with the VOICES Act, and provided trainings and technical assistance to address these issues. The Civil Rights Bureau has also opened two investigations into departments based on potentially systemic issues with VOICES Act compliance. Both investigations are ongoing.

The higher-than-expected compliance reporting for 2022 is due to the Attorney General's office's significant outreach efforts throughout the past year to inform, train and further bring law enforcement agencies into compliance. Specifically, Raoul's office engaged with immigration advocates, community groups, victims' rights advocates and legal aid organizations to increase awareness of the law's requirements. Thanks to this outreach, the Attorney General's office has also seen improved compliance levels for 2023 reporting so far this year. March 1, 2024 was the deadline for law enforcement agencies to report for calendar year 2023. Although Raoul's Civil Rights Bureau is currently processing and evaluating those reports, a significant number of reports were received in advance of the deadline.

The Attorney General's [Civil Rights Bureau](#) protects the civil rights of all Illinois residents. The bureau monitors, investigates and enforces civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on behalf of the state, works to strengthen civil rights laws and participates in community outreach programs. Members of the public are encouraged to report discrimination or hate crimes by emailing CivilRights@ilag.gov or by calling the Civil Rights Hotline at 1-877-581-3692.