



Kanawha County Commission

Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Commission President Kent Carper, Kanawha County Commission

304-357-0109

Kanawha County Commission opposes plan to release prisoners from regional jail, announces it will continue to pay regional jail costs

During its April 2nd Kanawha County Commission meeting, the Commission heard from Kanawha County Prosecuting Attorney Chuck Miller concerning ongoing efforts to release inmates from jails in West Virginia. Several organizations, including the WV ACLU and Mountain State Justice, have called on Governor Justice to sign an executive order allowing inmates to be released early. The WV-ACLU's proposal encourages the release of prisoners over the age of 55. In addition, a lawsuit pending in Federal Court (3:18 cv01526) requests that the Federal Court issue an immediate order directing the West Virginia Division of Corrections to release inmates.

Commission President Kent Carper stated, "We heard loud and clear from the Prosecuting Attorney that the effort to allow a mass release of prisoners, including any plan that could potentially allow the release of convicted murderers or sex offenders, raises several legal issues and would prove to be very dangerous to the public.

Law enforcement is already working 24/7 to keep the public safe during this pandemic."

Commissioner Ben Salango noted, "We need to support our prosecuting attorneys, the sheriff's office, and all first responders during the pandemic. A release of prisoners convicted of serious or violent crimes, regardless of the current circumstances, is not a good plan."

In addition, Kanawha County has announced that it will continue to pay its regional jail bill during the COVID-19 pandemic. Commissioner Carper added, "Some counties have indicated they will stop paying jail costs during this pandemic. Kanawha County recognizes that we need to continue to support the Division of Corrections and the State of West Virginia during the pandemic. We have an obligation and we intend to fulfill it."