

Safe-T Act is Dangerous

An Illinois mayor sounded the alarm on "how dangerous" a state law that eliminates cash bail will be, arguing communities will be left more vulnerable and victims of crimes will lose "their constitutional rights."

"We must not allow this law to stand as passed," Orland Park Mayor Keith Pekau said Tuesday at a town meeting. "I can't even begin to tell you how dangerous this act is."

The Orland Village Board unanimously passed a resolution Tuesday demanding state legislators work with public safety representatives to address problems they see with the Safety Accountability and Fairness Equity Today Act (Safe-T Act). The village is mostly located in Cook County, the most populated county in the state.

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed the bill into law last year, provisions such as eliminating cash bail will take effect on Jan. 1 of 2023. The law makes Illinois the first state in the country to eliminate cash bail.

The Safe-T Act will also restrict who can be arrested, increase eligibility for probation for people convicted of some drug crimes, among other changes to policing and police training. Supporters of the law say it will make the criminal justice system more fair for Black, Latino and minority communities.

The legislation has been criticized by politicians and law enforcement officials across the state, with Pekau going over in the town meeting the different ways the community will reportedly suffer if the law is implemented as is.

"Someone could decide to live in your shed, and all we could do is give them a ticket," said Pekau, who is currently running for Congress. "This is a massive threat to residents of Orland Park, Cook County and Illinois."

But it doesn't end here," said Pekau. "There is currently a bill in front of the house to remove school resource officers from our schools, which means no school resource officer at Sandburg High School. The city of Chicago has already done this," he said. "I personally do not want to see the city of Chicago become the standard for how we conduct public safety because they have abandoned their police officers, abandoned their residents and created a war zone full of criminals."

A press release from Orland Park Village states that abolishing cash bail will affect "almost every offense," including "kidnapping, armed robbery, second degree murder, drug induced homicide, aggravated DUI, threatening a public official and aggravated fleeing and eluding." Town leadership also argued that victims of crimes will be denied "their constitutional rights," denounced how offenders released on electronic monitoring devices will need to be in violation of their parole for 48 hours before police can act, and police will no longer be able to remove trespassers from a residence or business.

"It's like they won't stop until they destroy our communities and our society," Pekau said at the meeting. "We all need to take a stand against this, this is a very dangerous bill."



Pekau also sent a letter to the governor informing him of Orland Park's unanimously adopted resolution and doubling-down on his criticisms of the legislation.

"This legislation, at nearly 800 pages, was poorly drafted, passed in the middle of the night with little to no public debate or review, and contained various reactionary requirements inconsistent with long-standing and sound jurisprudence," the letter, which was provided to Fox News Digital, states.

"The Orland Park Village Board demands that State lawmakers own up to the mistakes they have made with the erroneously named SAFE-T Act and get rid of the dangerous provisions of the SAFE-T Act that hamper the ability of law enforcement to pursue and arrest offenders."

The letter, which was sent on Friday, has gone unanswered, Pekau told Fox News Digital on Monday.

Orland Park leaders are far from alone in decrying the law.

Former state attorney and current state Rep. Patrick Windhorst said this month that the elimination of cash bail "will reduce public safety and lead to more crime in Illinois." Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley wrote a recent op-ed outlining that "400 criminal defendants will be released back into our community" due to the law. And Johnson County Sheriff Peter Sopczak warned that "the gates are open" and criminals and suspects are "going to be let out onto the streets."

The Democratic governor has meanwhile celebrated the Safe-T Act as one that supports [local police](#) departments with funds and equipment such as cameras, and that the elimination of cash bail will prevent low-level criminals from sitting in jails for months.

"We do not want someone in jail because they were arrested for a low-level crime like shoplifting to be sitting in jail for months or maybe even years," Pritzker said last month, according to the Center Square. "At the same time, someone who is a wealthy drug dealer, perhaps accused of murder and arrested, can show up with a suitcase full of money and get out of jail.

The governor's office did not immediately respond to Fox News Digital's request for comment on Orland Park leadership's criticisms.

The changes to the state's criminal justice system comes after Chicago saw its highest homicide rate in 25 years in 2021, and the city continues to struggle with crimes such as carjackings, illegal street racing, shootings, and robberies.