

Sanctuary policy - When indulgence breeds violence

How sanctuary policies make a mockery of the rule of law

Montgomery County, Maryland, just north of the District of Columbia, is known for leafy neighborhoods, stellar schools and high incomes. (It's the 17th-highest earning county in the entire nation, according to the latest census data.) But lately, Montgomery County is garnering national attention for something rather different — a succession of horrific crimes committed by illegal immigrants.

In the space of only one month, six illegal immigrants have been arrested in the county for different sexual offenses, ranging from molestation to sexual assault at knife-point. One of the alleged victims was as young as 11 years old. The alleged perpetrators are all hail from either El Salvador or Honduras — and, again, all are here illegally.

Montgomery County officials bear the blame. The county is not officially a “sanctuary county,” but on its own official website, Montgomery County states that “as a matter of policy, we do not inquire about anyone’s immigration status to support immigration enforcement, nor do we conduct immigration raids or investigations.” So, close enough. The county has an “open door” policy for illegal immigrants.

It's not only a surge in sexual violence that Montgomery County's indulgent policies toward illegal immigrants is bringing to the formerly pacific area. MS-13, the homicidal Central American gang, is now active in the county, too. Local news outlet WJLA reported recently on the discovery of an MS-13 “destroyer house,” “outfitted with graffiti, a shrine to the Saint of Death and a miniature skeleton hanging from a ceiling fan.” The upshot is the gang was operating in plain sight out of the hideout in a busy area. MS-13 gang members have committed beatings, murders, and even forced teenagers into prostitution in the county.

Sanctuary policies like Montgomery County's make a mockery of the rule of law. And the dangers aren't merely theoretical, as the county's travails over recent months demonstrate.

There are several hundred sanctuary cities and states across the country. West Coast states California, Oregon and Washington are some of the most hostile to enforcing the country's immigration laws. The grim results there, too, are plain to see. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) recently released a list of seven illegal immigrants in the Pacific Northwest who committed violent crimes; all had detainment orders that were ignored by local authorities.

One Mexican illegal immigrant in Clackamas County, Oregon, for instance, was released by local authorities despite an ICE detainer. He went on to murder his wife. Another illegal immigrant in Washington State allegedly murdered and disremembered his victim mere months after his release by local authorities who too ignored ICE orders.

Jeff Sessions, the former attorney general who was (unfortunately) forced out by the president, was a stalwart in his opposition to sanctuary policies. While serving as AG, Mr. Sessions used his available powers at the Justice Department to investigate and ultimately punish those areas that refused to cooperate with federal immigration law. This was the right policy in the name of both public safety and the rule of law. Attorney General William Barr would do well to pursue similar policies that rein in sanctuary cities, counties and states. The safety of the American people, in Montgomery County and across the entire country, depends on it.