

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Building 1, Suite W-400
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Charleston, West Virginia 25305
Established May 28, 2020



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
CABINET SECRETARY
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Date: July 13, 2023

To: Honorable Jim Justice, Governor of West Virginia

From: Jeff S. Sandy, Cabinet Secretary, CFE, CAMS

Re: Announcement of Retirement

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise you of my desire to retire from state government. I respectfully request that my last day be on a date that is in the best interest of your administration.

My years in your administration have been filled with honor, integrity, and respect that I will cherish until I take my last breath. During my 43 years of public service, I have been very blessed and the opportunity you honored me with your telephone call on December 21st, 2016, at 1:36PM will always be remembered. I enjoyed working with Chiefs of Staff Nick Casey, Mike Hall, Brian Abraham, and Deputy Chief Ann Urling. I leave knowing we made a difference.

Over the past six years, your administration has brought people together for the common good of the state. The success comes from your leadership and the strong relationships developed with city, county, state, and federal officials. As a coach you know there is no "I" in TEAM.

In fact, in my 43 years of public service the cooperation of city, county, state, and federal law enforcement has been the best I have been part of. I report to you that according to the FBI Crimes statistics with 87% to 90% of West Virginia's population reporting, West Virginia's total violent crime incidents decreased 27.8% from 2016 through 2021. Those figures are as follows: 2016 totaled 5,189; 2017 totaled 5,151; 2018 totaled 4,106; 2019 totaled 4,068; 2020 totaled 3,970; and 2021 totaled 3,748. I also report that total property crime incidents decreased by 40.5% from 2016 through 2021. Those figures are as follows: 2016 totaled 34,586; 2017 totaled 31,100; 2018 totaled 24,060; 2019 totaled 22,489; 2020 totaled 21,944; and 2021 totaled 20,576. As stated earlier, West Virginia should be proud of the diligent teamwork city, county, state, and federal law enforcement are performing every day.

In addition to the cooperation of law enforcement, it is well documented that your administration has had tremendous economic success. As Caroline Krafft, PhD research shows and I quote: *"Improvements in economic conditions, such as lower unemployment and higher wages, play an important role in reducing crime."*

As you very well remember, our first major event was the Parkersburg industrial fire. The state's response to this terrible event set the bar high for the state's responses to West Virginia emergencies. Over the past six (6) years, the Department of Homeland Security (HLS) has made legislative and internal adjustments that have made the state safer for the present and for future generations. I would like to address some of those:

- The formation of the consolidated HLS legal team in 2017 has increased sound decisions and saved substantial litigation costs.
- Formation of the Division of Administrative Services that has greatly improved the financial reporting of HLS.
 - In fact, in 2017 our prisons had an audit report that rated their financial status as an F and in 2023 the audit report had "No Findings".
- Consolidation of jails, prisons, and juvenile correctional systems.
 - The consolidation increased the effectiveness of corrections from having three separate agencies operating in state government to one.
 - In fact, during COVID, the ability to move corrections officers from the three (3) legacy agencies to areas where the staff was needed ensured facilities were operational.
 - West Virginia counties in 2017 were having financial difficulties and your administration has saved our counties over \$100 million in their jail billing since the consolidation.
 - Your introduction of body scanners and the mail scanning program has greatly reduced illegal drugs coming into the state's correctional facilities and they have saved lives and the high costs of intensive care from drug overdoses.
 - Establishment of the incarcerated drug rehabilitation program called "GOALS" (Getting Over Addicted Lifestyles Successfully) has made a difference in helping drug users while they are incarcerated. GOALS has provided our judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys with another avenue to help drug abusers.
 - In fact, a DCR study has shown it to be 65% effective and it has saved the counties over \$2.5 million and the state \$7 million in the past four (4) years.
 - The gratitude of multiple graduates of the GOALS program who have stated "Tell the Governor he saved my life."
 - In 2023, the state hired its first GOALS graduate as a "Recovery Coach" for inmates with addiction issues. The graduate has been "drug-free" for over 4 years.
 - Although corrections have been in a state of emergency twice over the past 6 years, incidents have been kept at a minimum due to the dedication of corrections employees.
- Reorganization of Justice and Community Services, which has improved the accountability of state and federal grants.
- Reorganization of the Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety as Department of Homeland Security in 2020. Since this reorganization, city, county, and federal partners have provided accolades on our response to State of Emergencies.
- Re-designation of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management as the Division of Emergency Management in 2020.
 - The formation and transformation of the Division of Emergency Management has allowed our state to address our state's emergencies quickly and more efficiently.
 - Your efforts to modernize and develop a long-term maintenance plan for our Statewide Interoperable Radio Network communication system (SIRN) will protect our 1st responders for the next decade and beyond.
 - Preservation of critical federal funding by resolving Federal Communications Commission concerns regarding 911-related fees.

- Codification of the West Virginia Fusion Center in 2020.
 - The Fusion Center and the formation of the Narcotics Intelligence Center have provided our state's law enforcement access to high-level intelligence to combat crimes of the 21st Century. The results have been outstanding.
 - Solving crimes with modern investigative techniques that had never been accomplished in West Virginia before.
 - The formation of the "American Governor's Border Strike Force" in 2022, and in its 1st year rescued 8 missing children; seized \$1.5 million of illicit US Currency; 317 illegal firearms; 656 undocumented aliens; and 7,359 pounds of illegal drugs.
- The formation of the West Virginia Safe School Initiative and the implantation of the "See Send Application".
- Reorganization of West Virginia Fire Commission and Office of the State Fire Marshal in 2020.
- Reorganization of the West Virginia Parole Board in 2020.
- Finally, when mistakes were made and times were difficult, we addressed the problem, and we were always transparent to the citizens of this great state.

I retire with countless memories including but not limited to:

- Mourning with the families of our employees that we have lost or were seriously injured.
- Fighting the COVID war to ensure the safety of the public, employees, and inmates.
- Celebrating with the brave men and women of Homeland Security when they have accomplished feats that were above and beyond the call of duty.
- Visiting our brave corrections officers on Christmas Day over the past 6 years.
- Talking to drug users and hearing that the GOALS program saved and changed their life.
- Countless communications from inmates who thanked us for providing them with a safer facility and making them a better person upon departure.
- Working with our brave first responders throughout the state.
- The faith you had in HLS by assigning multiple investigative projects that without question saved the state millions in potential loss of federal funding and employee misconduct.

The past 6 years have gone by so fast. The Cabinet Secretary for the Department of Homeland is not a job nor a career; it is a short-term servant to the great people of West Virginia. Having said that, I thank you for providing me with this life-changing opportunity. Be advised that after our date of separation, never hesitate to contact me if a need arises.

In ending, congratulations on your outstanding accomplishments Governor. God Bless you and the Great State of West Virginia!