

LATEST NEWS

Laramie County sheriff's deputies making more immigration arrests around Wyoming's largest city

Through operation targeting undocumented truck drivers and local arrests, sheriff estimates 70 people in Laramie County have been placed into ICE custody since October.



by Andrew Graham
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Laramie County Sheriff Brian Kozak, who keeps a vacancy sign posted above his jail door, indicated over the last few days that a group of his deputies are helping ICE arrest increasing numbers of undocumented people in the Cheyenne area. (Andrew Graham/WyoFile)

Since announcing two months ago that he and 25 of his deputies would participate in federal immigration enforcement, Laramie County Sheriff Brian Kozak has led a crackdown on undocumented people in and

around Wyoming's largest city.

Kozak announced in October that a significant portion of his roughly 170 commissioned officers had received federal training under a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement program that enlists local law enforcement in the search for people illegally in the country.

This week, through a [well-publicized](#) operation targeting undocumented truckers, and through comments he made to WyoFile, Kozak revealed the arrest of as many as 70 undocumented immigrants in his county within the last two months.

On Friday, Kozak announced that alongside agents from ICE and the Wyoming Highway Patrol, which is also contracting with the federal immigration agency, he and his deputies had helped arrest 40 undocumented truck drivers over a three-day sweep last week.

Then on Monday, Kozak told WyoFile those arrests came in addition to around 30 people who, since Oct. 1, have been pulled over by his deputies, found to be undocumented and handed over to ICE.

It's a notable number of people picked up for deportation out of one Wyoming county — though the truck drivers were not living locally — and likely marks the most concentrated immigration enforcement operations in the state during President Donald Trump's second administration.

The enforcement is making Laramie County, Wyoming and the country safer, Kozak has maintained. "Most definitely their focus is people who are a danger to the community," he said of ICE officials.

But it's unclear how many of the people detained in Laramie County are the type of hardened criminals both Kozak and Trump administration officials say they're prioritizing for deportation.

"We were sold that with this doubling down on immigration enforcement they'd be trying to get the worst of the worst off the street," Janna Farley, a spokesperson for the American Civil Liberties Union of Wyoming, told WyoFile on Monday. So far, she said, it seemed the sheriff's department and its enforcement partners were casting a much wider net in a county that's home to Wyoming's most populous city.



Laramie County Sheriff Brian Kozak attends a legislative hearing on immigration legislation during the 2025 session. (Andrew Graham/WyoFile)

In a press release touting the trucking enforcement operation, Kozak referred to the 40 drivers arrested as “criminal aliens.” In a video posted to his department’s Facebook account, the sheriff said those drivers were now awaiting deportation. In immigration court proceedings, however, detainees have a range of legal reasons for which they may seek asylum in the country. Kozak also noted that two of the drivers arrested had accumulated serious criminal convictions unrelated to their immigration status, including larceny and aggravated assault.

In a Monday interview, he added a third person to that list of people with criminal convictions, and said every person detained during the immigration was pulled over on suspicion of one crime or another.

“We were pulling over for obvious violations,” the sheriff said Monday. He cited broken or missing safety lights and speeding, as well as violations that made trucks less safe on the roadways. There were 45 brake violations found, 16 issues with commercial drivers licenses and 10 violations of English language proficiency rules that the Trump administration has ordered stricter enforcement of, according to a statement issued Monday by the Wyoming Highway Patrol.

National immigration arrest numbers, including the numbers for Wyoming and Colorado through this past summer, show that the majority of people detained by ICE [do not have criminal convictions](#).

Though the exact number of stops conducted by the different agencies was hard to pin down because some reporting may have overlapped, Kozak estimated officers conducted more than 190 traffic stops over the three-day operation. Based on that number, the percentage of drivers ICE agents determined to be undocumented was relatively high, Kozak noted, as was the overall number of violations.

“I was completely surprised by the number of unlicensed, undocumented drivers and unsafe trucks,” he said. “We have a big problem in our country.”



A photograph posted to Facebook by Laramie County Sheriff officials shows a truck engaged in the effort to locate undocumented truck drivers, or other drivers committing safety violations. (Laramie County Sheriff's Office)

The proportion of violators may have been buoyed by the operation's focus which, according to Kozak, was on trucks that were traveling roads that commercial drivers would use to avoid the heavily-enforced Interstate 80 corridor.

Wyoming Highway Patrol officials touted the operation slightly differently in its statement, which was headlined: “Three Day Multi-Agency Operation Leads To Multiple Arrests, Commercial Carrier Safety

Violations.” WHP officials indicated in the statement that inspections made by their officers had led to 12 immigration arrests.

Kozak’s Facebook video, on the other hand, headlined that Operation Safe Haul “targeted undocumented truck drivers,” resulting in “40 ICE deportations.” Detractors, like Farley with the ACLU, say that’s in keeping with what they describe as mixed messaging throughout Kozak’s enhanced cooperation with ICE.

In October, when Kozak announced his enrollment in what is commonly referred to as a 287(g) agreement with ICE (named after the federal statute allowing for the arrangement), the sheriff said that “Wyoming does not want to be a sanctuary state for those that ignore our laws.”

In joining the federal government’s crackdown, and doing so with an unprecedented number of deputized officers for a Wyoming law enforcement agency, Kozak aligned his department [with state politicians who have called for increased immigration enforcement](#) by local officers traditionally entrusted to enforce state, rather than federal, law. But at the same time, he emphasized in the 287(g) [announcement](#) that his deputies “will not proactively engage in immigration enforcement.”

He pledged not to engage in racial profiling or overzealous immigration enforcement.

“We affirmed our pledge to obey and enforce the United States Constitution which prohibits any type of profiling or discrimination based upon race, language, ethnicity or perceived immigration status,” Kozak said during the October announcement.

Kozak also highlighted that he was likely the first commanding officer of a local law enforcement agency to complete the ICE training himself.

Kozak has been no stranger to the spotlight since first being elected sheriff in 2022, with his department purchasing a Denver billboard in 2024 to suggest Colorado law enforcement would be better off working in more conservative Wyoming. Earlier this year, he hung a flashing “vacancy” sign, in the manner of a roadside motel, above his jailhouse door, an effort, he said at the time, to tout that his jail has plenty of space for alleged lawbreakers, including federal detainees.

On Monday, Kozak told WyoFile he’s holding to the promises he made when starting the 287(g) program. “We have never gone to someone’s house or place of employment,” seeking someone because of their immigration status, he said. The vast majority of the 30 people he estimated his deputies detained on behalf of ICE were first contacted during a traffic stop on suspicion of a crime, he said.

But those crimes can vary in severity, Kozak noted. His agency is asking for local prosecutors to file criminal charges against someone detained with a felony that implies a public safety threat, like a DUI, he

said. But other people are being stopped on suspicion of a traffic violation, like speeding, and they're being handed over to ICE for deportation proceedings once their immigration status comes into question.

“We don't want our local court holding them up,” by adjudicating a Wyoming misdemeanor charge, Kozak said. “We will not charge the local crime and (instead) book them into the immigration process.”

To immigration and civil liberty advocates, Kozak is describing the type of enforcement that has long driven allegations that the 287(g) program invites racial profiling into communities.

“It really is what we've been talking about and what people within the community are afraid of,” Farley said. “We don't know why someone was being targeted for a traffic violation, and hopefully it wasn't racially motivated — as in someone seeing a brown person and then ‘oh, it just so happens you see their brake light was out.’”

In response to questions about the possibility that critics would perceive racial profiling during Operation Safe Haul, Kozak noted that a number of truck drivers cited for safety violations were citizens or otherwise legally in the country. “We stopped any violation and we enforced all laws,” he said.



Lee Sanders

November 26, 2025 at 1:09 pm

Entering the country illegally is a misdemeanor, not a felony. I wonder if everybody who has committed a misdemeanor should be deported or jailed, especially without due process. Watch out all you jaywalkers!



Rick Sather

November 26, 2025 at 9:07 am

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