



All Hat, No Cattle

Slaughter Claims ‘Constitutional Sheriff’ Title, But Las Vegas, NV and Riverside, CA County Sheriffs Actually Live It

Op-Ed by Linda Madsen

In a stunning display of courage that echoes centuries of righteous resistance, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and Sheriff Kevin McMahill are standing firm against a local judge’s order to free a dangerous repeat offender — and in doing so, they are putting the ancient Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates into powerful practice.

Thirty-six-year-old Joshua Sanchez-Lopez, already convicted of rape and involuntary manslaughter and carrying a staggering 35 arrests, was ordered released by Las Vegas Justice Court Judge Eric Goodman on electronic monitoring after posting bail on a grand larceny charge. Sanchez-Lopez has a documented history of skipping court dates and openly mocking the ankle monitor program — even posting selfies on Snapchat while under supervision.

Metro police told the court on January 29 they would not comply. Assistant General Counsel Mike Dickerson made the department’s position crystal clear: “Sheriff McMahill will not violate the law to appease the Las Vegas Justice Court and let out people who he deems to be dangerous... lives are on the line.”

Judge Goodman responded by threatening to hold Metro officers in contempt. The suspect’s public defender called the refusal an attack on the “rule of law.” But Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo immediately backed the sheriff: “When repeat violent offenders are ordered back onto our streets, law enforcement has a duty to speak up and push back.”

This is not defiance for defiance’s sake. This is the Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates in action — and it is precisely what a constitutional sheriff looks like when he takes his oath seriously.

A constitutional sheriff is an elected county official who understands he is not a mere enforcer of every edict from judges, governors, or Washington, but the chief law enforcement authority in his jurisdiction. His primary allegiance is to the U.S. Constitution, natural rights, and God’s higher law — not blind obedience to any “higher” authority. This concept flows directly from the Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates: when a judge or higher power issues an order that endangers the innocent or violates eternal principles (like protecting life and community safety), the sheriff has a sacred duty to interpose, refuse enforcement, and shield the people. Sheriffs who live this out are the frontline defenders against a judicial system that has lost its moral compass.

Sheriff McMahill is embodying that role right now. By refusing to release a known violent threat, he is doing what constitutional sheriffs across America were elected to do.

Riverside County, California, Sheriff Chad Bianco is doing the same. In March 2026, Bianco seized more than 650,000 ballots from the November election as part of an investigation into potential discrepancies in the county’s vote count for Proposition 50. He ordered a physical recount of the ballots to compare them against the recorded totals, stating, “There is no acceptable error, small or large, in our elections,” and “This investigation is simple: Physically count the ballots and compare that result with the total votes recorded.” Despite opposition from California Attorney General Rob Bonta and Secretary of State Shirley Weber—who called the move “unprecedented,” “unacceptable,” and a danger to public trust—Bianco pressed forward, refusing to cooperate fully with state demands and highlighting how higher officials were attempting to block the probe. This is textbook interposition: a sheriff asserting local authority to protect election integrity and the people’s right to honest elections against state-level resistance.

Tragically, not every sheriff who claims the “constitutional sheriff” title lives up to it in action. Unlike some self-identified “constitutional sheriffs” who assert the right to refuse enforcement of judicial orders they view as infringing on constitutional rights—such as certain pandemic mandates—Cascade

County Sheriff Jesse Slaughter’s record reveals the opposite that stands in sharp contrast to the accountability and courage shown in Las Vegas.

Sheriff Slaughter grumbled about enforcing mask mandates, but made sure his deputies enforced them. In 2020, when a visiting judge held a man in contempt for refusing to wear a mask in a court setting and ordered his arrest, Slaughter’s deputy (acting as bailiff) carried out the arrest and jailing. In response to a subsequent letter from three local district judges reminding Sheriff Slaughter of his duty to enforce court orders and uphold their authority in the courtroom, Slaughter affirmed his respect for the judges, stated that his deputies were already complying and would continue to do so, and emphasized that he takes his responsibility to carry out their orders seriously—even when he personally disagrees with them. This stance prioritizes adherence to judicial directives over resistance, distinguishing him from the true constitutional sheriff model that might involve nullifying or defying such orders.

While Las Vegas County Sheriff McMahill interposes against a judge’s reckless release order to protect the public, Sheriff Slaughter has repeatedly failed to interpose — even when his own department’s actions violated constitutional standards and endangered lives. Slaughter’s department aggressively enforced a judge-issued search warrant for animal cruelty violations at 77 Wexford Lane. The warrant stemmed from Pam Polejewski purchasing cat food and kitty litter — items she delivered to Michael Hanson, who lived on the property she owned but did not reside at full-time.

The only recording of the fatal confrontation is an 89-second audio captured on Detective Jacob Tri’s cellphone. Independent audio analysis by the Cascade County Libertarian Party and the Montana Citizens Council on Judicial Accountability proves Tri fired his Glock first and then again after clearing a malfunction that took over two seconds to clear, before the victim, Hanson got off a single shot.

Detective Tri did not have the physical search warrant on him—his partner was still enroute with the printed copy—so he had no lawful authority to order the legal occupant (Hanson) off the property or to jump the fence and trespass. Without the warrant physically present, Tri’s command and physical intrusion violated Montana Code Annotated § 46-5-227, which requires officers to exhibit the warrant upon request. This directly contravenes the very constitutional principles a sheriff is sworn to uphold.

Sheriff Slaughter later testified under oath that the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office engaged in “absolutely no unlawful activity.” In another widely circulated video, Slaughter himself stated that a warrant “bolsters your case” but “is not required” for ordering a person off their own property—a position legal experts say contradicts Fourth Amendment doctrine and Montana Code Annotated § 46-5-227 and clearly doesn’t represent the image of a true constitutional sheriff.

Critics, including the Montana Citizens Council on Judicial Accountability, have cross-referenced the June 4, 2024, Coroner’s Inquest transcript with physical evidence and allege Slaughter’s testimony contains 22 documented falsehoods. Despite the audio evidence clearly showing procedural violations, the jury ruled that Hanson did not die by criminal means. This outcome is emblematic of a national pattern in which juries are often loathe to hold officers criminally accountable. Officers are routinely given higher credibility in their testimony, and with the victim deceased and typically no independent witnesses present, it becomes extraordinarily difficult to prosecute or convict an officer.

Nationwide statistics underscore this accountability deficit: Police kill more than 1,200 civilians each year, yet officers face criminal charges in fewer than 1% of fatal incidents, according to comprehensive data from Mapping Police Violence. Convictions are even rarer.

In Montana, the statistics are particularly troubling and paint a picture of elevated risk for civilians. The state recorded one of the highest per-capita rates of fatal police shootings in 2024, with 13 civilian deaths at nearly 12 per million residents — more than double the national average of about 5 per million. This

elevated rate of civilian deaths, combined with the same low national accountability standards, highlights the systemic issues plaguing Cascade County and the broader state.

Slaughter’s department then awarded Detective Tri the Law Enforcement Purple Heart for the incident — a clear attempt to whitewash the procedural failures and excessive force. Yet the audio timeline and lack of warrant on scene have fueled ongoing criticism, a 2025 civil lawsuit by Hanson’s estate, and accusations that the department failed to interpose against a questionable judicial order before a life was lost — all over cat food on a property where the bond-restricted party did not even live.

The Commander’s Liability: A Jail in Crisis In the realm of law enforcement, the title of Sheriff is a mandate of absolute responsibility. Nowhere is the cost of a leadership void more visible than inside the Cascade County Detention Center — a facility under Slaughter’s direct and exclusive oversight. The legal doctrine of Respondeat Superior makes this crystal clear: the Sheriff, as the superior officer, is ultimately liable and responsible for the operation of his jail — from the suicides to the blood-contaminated food — and for the conduct of his deputies. In legal terms, this doctrine holds the employer (here, the Sheriff) vicariously liable for the wrongful acts of employees performed within the scope of their duties. Each settlement and every botched investigation is therefore a direct reflection of the leadership of Jesse Slaughter.

The facility has become a focal point of preventable tragedy and stomach-churning negligence. Since 2021, the county has paid out three-quarters of a million dollars for inmate suicides, including a \$550,000 settlement for Michael Lee Alexander, Jr. and \$200,000 for Aleesha Mae Kempa. The timeline of failure is relentless: • 2021: Inmate suicide → \$550,000 wrongful-death settlement • 2022: Second inmate suicide → federal civil-rights lawsuit • 2023: Additional settlement (~\$200,000) • June–July 2024: Three inmate deaths in a single two-week period (two suicides, one overdose) • 2025: Three detention officers arrested in separate incidents over a three-week period (off-duty felony assaults, DUI and misconduct)

However, the failures extend beyond mortality rates to basic human dignity. In a shocking federal lawsuit, inmates have alleged they were served food contaminated with human blood. According to the filings, a kitchen worker’s injury resulted in blood dripping into the gravy and onto trays, which were then served to the population despite the clear biohazard. This level of oversight failure — literally forcing those in the county’s care to consume blood-tainted meals — highlights a department that has lost its moral and operational compass.

The Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrate: Courage vs. Betrayal

To understand the depth of this crisis, critics point to the “Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrate”—the principle that local officials must interpose to protect citizens from unjust or lawless higher orders. In Las Vegas, Sheriff Kevin McMahill recently channeled this doctrine by refusing a judge’s order to release a violent criminal with 35 arrests, declaring that lives were on the line. True “constitutional sheriffs” embrace this role, refusing to enforce unlawful federal mandates or overreach.

For example, Clark County (Las Vegas), Nevada, Sheriff Joe Lombardo (and predecessors) have publicly positioned themselves as constitutional guardians, resisting federal gun control expansions and emphasizing local sovereignty in line with the lesser magistrates tradition—prioritizing oath-bound protection over deference to higher powers. **Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco has joined their ranks by defying state officials to safeguard the integrity of the ballot box itself.**

This courage stands in sharp contrast to jurisdictions where officials prioritize political agendas over safety. In Fairfax County, Virginia, Sheriff Stacey Kincaid recently demonstrated the opposite of this doctrine. Her office refused to cooperate with federal immigration authorities (ICE) regarding a 18-year-old illegal alien—still enrolled as an 11th grader in the local school system—who was arrested for groping schoolgirls. In that case, the system shielded a predator rather than interposing for innocent

