

The Star-Ledger

They were released early from N.J. prisons. ICE grabbed nearly 100 of them as they walked out.

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NJ Advance Media for NJ.com and The Star-Ledger
Published Nov. 5, 2020

Ninety-five New Jersey prisoners released ahead of schedule Wednesday were picked up by federal immigration officers, the state corrections department said Thursday.

More than 2,200 were released early statewide, the result of a first-in-the-nation law reducing sentences because of the threat of COVID-19 behind bars.

Corrections officers can hand someone over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement if the person has been convicted or charged with a serious crime or has a pending deportation order from a court, according to rules from the state attorney general's office.

Those guidelines were followed Wednesday, the department said in an emailed statement to NJ Advance Media.

An ICE spokesman in Newark cited a slightly lower number, saying 88 inmates with detainees were taken into custody Nov. 4.

"All are violent offenders or have convictions for serious crimes such as homicide, Aggravated Assault, drug trafficking and child sexual exploitation," according to a statement sent by Emilio Dabul. "Some were placed in removal proceedings and housed in ICE facilities outside of NJ, while others were detained locally pending execution of their final orders of removal."

Almost another 100 of the early releases had other orders from courts to keep them detained, and they were turned over to different law enforcement agencies, according to the department. State Superior Courts ordered 56 to remain incarcerated, 4 had detainees from municipal courts and 38 had orders from out of state.

State Sen. Joe Pennachio, R-Morris, criticized the releases Thursday in light of the state's nursing home deaths.

"Is this about public health, or is it about releasing prisoners?" Pennachio said in a statement. "This latest maneuver once again demonstrates the administration is more concerned about releasing criminals than protecting elderly New Jerseyans."

Social services met with all prisoners getting out early to make sure those in need had food, medication, housing and Narcan, a nasal spray used to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, according to the department. Anyone who didn't have at least \$25 were given a \$25 grocery card, and some without housing received another \$150.

Nonprofit and religious leaders parked at prisons and transit hubs around the state told NJ Advance Media the releases generally went smoothly.

“New Jersey more than met the challenge,” said former Gov. Jim McGreevey, who leads the New Jersey Re-entry Corporation.

Prisoners will continue to have up to eight months knocked off sentences as long as the state’s public health emergency remains in effect, and the governor’s office previously estimated around 1,000 people could be released early in the following weeks through January.