

From the Office of the Sheriff: “The Price of Extraditions – Money well spent”

The Sheriff is responsible to bring people to court. Often that is fairly easy and inexpensive. For others it can be very time consuming and costly. On any given month we hold around 1,800 active arrest warrants for people. Most of these are for failure to appear in court or for contempt of court. Should you be up in Hayward fishing and the DNR comes to check your fishing license, the warrant will come up and you will go to jail. It is then our responsibility to transport you from Hayward to Dodge County. We have two full-time employees who do nothing more than travel the state picking up those wanted by the courts or arrested for outstanding warrants.

Over the past few years there has been greater discretion with warrants to ensure we are not just spinning our wheels, conducting costly trips. The court has the ability to place geo-restrictions on certain warrants. An example may be an 18-year old with an underage drinking ticket he did not pay. The courts place a geo-restriction that states Dodge County will only pick them up if arrested within Dodge or adjacent counties such as Columbia, Washington, Dane, Jefferson, or Fond Du Lac. For the more serious offense we will go virtually anywhere within the United States to bring you back to justice.

Should you be wanted in Dodge County and located in California there is an extradition process in which you can challenge being taken back to Dodge County. They call it “fighting extradition”. Extradition is defined as “to obtain surrender for trial by another authority.” In most cases you will lose that fight and the Governors exchange documentation which eventually gets to our office advising us that you can be picked up. At that point we decide if it is more cost effective to fly out and get you, or contract with one of several other agencies to deliver you to us.

So far this year we have contracted travel for eight extraditions. We have not done any ourselves. We paid a low of \$341.25 to bring Ashley Roebuck from Rock Island, IL. Ashley was wanted for Forgery. We paid \$2,133.60 to bring James Williams back from Los Angeles, CA. James owed \$37,000 in child support. Leann Paul was just arrested in Oklahoma and owes over \$26k in arrears, the cost to bring her back just \$776.00. In most cases, the court can assess these transportation costs onto the individual to reimburse the county.

Often we contract with the federal marshal’s service or a company called Transcor. They have vans driving the nation daily. The ride is not first class and you may visit many other states before you get back to Wisconsin as they pickup and drop off all the way out and back. We paid \$1,523.89 to bring Ron Chouinard back from Florida to face over \$60,000.00 in delinquent child support – what a deal! It is difficult for us to do these ourselves any cheaper.

I credit our judges and court system for a very firm but fiscally responsible policy on extraditions and geo-restrictions for such warrants. Just recently a young man called from Las Vegas. We have a warrant for him and he knows it. He wants to come back to Wisconsin but has no money. He asked that if he turns himself in would we come and pick him up. Sorry my friend, your warrant is not that serious and we are not running a travel agency. Extraditions, at times a costly way of doing business, but necessary. Thanks for listening tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.