



FINAL REPORT

Iowa Law Enforcement Academy Interim Study Committee

November 8, 2023, and November 30, 2023

MEMBERS

Senator Brad Zaun, Co-chairperson
Senator Nate Boulton
Senator Izaah Knox
Senator Charlie McClintock
Senator Cherielynn Westrich

Representative Steven Holt, Co-chairperson
Representative Sean Bagniewski
Representative Eric J. Gjerde
Representative Joshua Meggers
Representative Mike Vondran

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS

Laura Book
Sheriff Andy Brown
Brady Carney, ILEA Director
Lt. Michael Girsch
Meggan Guns
Susan Krisko

Ricardo Martinez II, ILEA Council Chair
Chief Dennis McDaniel
Major Adam Schaefer
Sheriff Jim Steinkuehler
Lt. Matt Struecker

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I. Authorization and Appointment

The Legislative Council approved the appointment of an Iowa Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) Interim Study Committee to meet during the 2023 Legislative Interim. The charge of the committee was, in accordance with Senate File 562 (2023 Iowa Acts, chapter 113, section 29), to review and evaluate ILEA entrance requirements, courses of study, attendance requirements, equipment requirements, equipment and facility sufficiency, training requirements, and fitness standards, and consider additional locations for law enforcement training schools and current and future facility needs.

II. Committee Proceedings

The ILEA Interim Study Committee met on November 8, 2023, to discuss concerns associated with the operation of the ILEA, and again on November 30, 2023, to discuss findings and recommendations to be included in the committee's final report.

III. November 8, 2023, Meeting

A. Preliminary Discussion. Co-chairperson Holt opened the general discussion by reviewing concerns addressed in the ILEA Supplemental Information document shared with members prior to the meeting. In addition to challenges caused by insufficient funding, Director Carney noted that training requirements leave little room for flexibility of training schedules, especially because schedules are often created six months to a year in advance due to renting off-site facilities and securing guest instructors. Director Carney also expressed the desire for more centralization and oversight over the regional training academies and law enforcement agencies to ensure training meets the ILEA's standards and that peace officers are qualified.

When asked whether the ILEA has determined its priorities, Director Carney noted the immediate challenges of scheduling, updating the curriculum, and keeping staff properly trained are already being addressed. As for long-term goals, Director Carney stated that additional funding is needed to maintain the training facility and update it. The ILEA has not increased tuition but it has increased fees, though at an amount that covers less than what is needed for maintenance. Director Carney said that additional funding could allow the ILEA to reduce the tuition burden on smaller law enforcement agencies that struggle with tighter budgets and new officer retention.

Multiple committee members had questions regarding training at the regional academies located at community colleges. In response to questions about whether training was more lenient at the regional academies, Director Carney stated that the ILEA does not have full-time representatives at the regional academies to oversee operations but reiterated the desire to increase standardization and training for staff. Director Carney also noted insufficient training was less likely to occur at the academies operated by the Des Moines Police Department, the Department of Public Safety, and the Cedar Rapids Police Department because each of those agencies predominantly train their own officers.

When asked about the ILEA's role for professional development and maintenance of certification for officers, Director Carney stated the ILEA is not always aware of certification issues because most certification oversight is the responsibility of individual law enforcement agencies. Director Carney wants to centralize certification information so the ILEA could scrutinize documents submitted by law enforcement agencies. Centralization of information would also allow the ILEA to identify law enforcement agencies in need of assistance in terms of paying tuition for new officers.

In response to questions regarding the similarity of experiences at each regional academy, Director Carney stated that standardization is important because an officer who becomes certified is eligible to



be a peace officer anywhere in the state. Any differences existing between regional academies was due to the ILEA's failure to update its standards. The director noted that standards will be updated every year by November 1. Director Carney also stated that regular training will be provided to instructional staff, which will allow the instructional staff to communicate the importance of specific training modules with new hires.

Mr. McDaniel, Chief of Police, Johnston Police Department, supports funding for additional ILEA staff and raising minimum standards and expectations.

When asked about ensuring that officers who have been decertified are not rehired by law enforcement agencies, Director Carney stated that the ILEA's staff works on investigations in a timely manner, but those investigations used to take up to 10 years. Director Carney was not sure how many decertified officers attempted to be rehired, but noted that the ILEA conducted about 100 investigations this year.

In response to questions about adhering to legislation and administrative rules, Director Carney stated that the Iowa Code is not restrictive or robust, but there are some issues with terminology that could be addressed. Adding more direction to the Code could take away the ILEA's flexibility and be subject to political whims. Director Carney mentioned that the bigger issue is updating the ILEA's administrative rules, which include conflicting information. In regard to pending legislation or court rulings, the ILEA needs to quickly ensure adherence to the law.

In response to a question about whether law enforcement agencies in small communities overlook issues due to cost restraints, Director Carney confirmed that does happen, particularly when a law enforcement agency has to wait months to send a new officer to the ILEA. Law enforcement agencies in small communities are also more likely to take on the risk of hiring an officer who has left another agency for disciplinary reasons, even if the discipline did not lead to decertification.

Ms. Guns, Assistant County Attorney, Polk County Attorney's Office, mentioned that county attorney offices play a role in notifying law enforcement agencies about recent court decisions and other changes to the law, but smaller county attorney offices might struggle to make sure that the law enforcement agencies in their respective jurisdictions are updated. Director Carney mentioned that the ILEA works with the Iowa County Attorneys Association to determine the parameters of dishonest conduct. Mr. Martinez, Chief of Police, Nevada Police Department, discussed the ILEA Council's hearing process and steps taken when decertification is recommended. Chief Martinez stated that discipline is a necessary part of the police community because compromising with bad behavior puts citizens at risk.

In response to a question about the citizenship requirement to become a peace officer, Director Carney said that any changes to the requirement would have to come from a level higher than the ILEA. Chief Martinez recalled only ever working with two potential new officer hires to seek a waiver of the requirement.

In response to a question about whether Iowa could have more regional academies, Director Carney stated that the administrative rules governing the ILEA are extensive and would hinder any rapid establishment of new regional academies.

B. Recommendation Discussion. Co-chairperson Holt solicited potential recommendations to be included in the committee's final report. Co-chairperson Holt mentioned evaluating centralization and support for the ILEA to train officers on changes in the law, including from court rulings, and evaluating funding necessary to address shortfalls identified in the ILEA Supplemental Information document. Senator Boulton suggested including the role of county attorneys in presenting information to local law enforcement agencies. Mr. Struecker, Lieutenant, Department of Public Safety, suggested including



the ability of the ILEA and regional academies to control their own facilities as a recommendation for the final report.

IV. November 30, 2023, Meeting

A. Findings and Recommendations. The committee is required to issue a report, including findings and recommendations, to the Governor and the General Assembly no later than December 15, 2023. Co-chairperson Holt discussed the proposed committee recommendations based on the committee's findings from the November 8, 2023, meeting. The committee voted to approve findings and recommendations.

B. Findings. That the committee finds that the current physical fitness requirements, academic requirements for graduation, standards for firearm certification, vehicle operations training, standards of conduct and discipline, and background checks implemented by the ILEA meet the expectations of the committee.

C. Recommendations.

1. That the Judiciary Committees of the House and Senate, working with county attorneys and the ILEA, determine the most effective system for disseminating and educating law enforcement officers in Iowa on new laws and court rulings pertinent to the performance of their duties. If necessary, codify this procedure in law and provide funding.
2. That the Legislature provide the funding necessary to address the shortfalls identified by ILEA Director Carney in his written responses to the committee, including the following:
 - a. Each academy cycle is split into two classes because the ILEA does not have a classroom facility large enough to train all recruits at the same time. The current facilities do not allow for joint lectures or training without reserving an auditorium or lecture hall somewhere else at Camp Dodge or at an off-base venue, which wastes recruit and instructional faculty time traveling to off-site locations, as well as using scarce training funds for the rental of off-site locations.
 - b. The ILEA gymnasium has space for a maximum of 20 people at a time, which does not allow for sufficient training or performance. Instructional staff uses makeshift training equipment in open-air spaces around Camp Dodge when the weather is sufficient. During extreme weather conditions, the ILEA attempts to use National Guard facilities when they are available. Again, scarce training funds are used to rent physical fitness space from the National Guard on Camp Dodge. Similar logistical challenges and wasted training time applies to having ILEA recruits traverse Camp Dodge to different training locations during what is a tight daily schedule.
 - c. ILEA recruits spend a lot of time learning and perfecting defensive tactics. To ensure safety, this takes space and soft landings. There is not an inside space of sufficient size inside the ILEA building to do this. Again, open-air space around Camp Dodge is used when the weather cooperates, but recruits must move and carry mats to different training locations on a daily basis. Some indoor facilities around Camp Dodge can be used when they are available, but safety mats must be moved to those locations as well.
 - d. Firearms range space is rented from the National Guard when it is available. Currently, there is a large, year-long construction project taking place at Camp



Dodge, so the vast majority of firearms training is taking place on a makeshift range near the far north end of Camp Dodge.

- e. There is no space to conduct active shooter training, building searches, or a variety of tactical training, so the ILEA has developed relationships and partnerships with outside businesses and vendors to use leased space.
- f. Driving training takes a lot of space and infrastructure. The Iowa Speedway in Newton has been a gracious partner to the ILEA for many years, but it is a business as well. It affords training time and space whenever it can, but it has many large scale events that take weeks and months to prepare for. Often, optimal training times during a 16-week training cycle do not align with speedway availability.
- g. Funding is another shortfall for the ILEA. For many years, the ILEA has followed the fee-based structure outlined in Iowa Code section 80B.11B, which requires that one-third of the Basic Academy's tuition cost be paid by the individual candidate, one-third of the cost be paid by the hiring agency, and the remainder be paid by the State. However, current appropriations currently do not cover one-third of Basic Academy costs. For FY 2024-2025, current appropriations will only cover 28.6 percent of projected Basic Academy costs. The current tuition cost to attend the 16-week, 636-hour Basic Academy at the ILEA is \$9,975, which results in a \$6,650 per-candidate-cost to local and county law enforcement agencies. In an effort to mitigate this financial burden, the ILEA has not raised tuition fees for the Basic Academy in over five years. In addition to the tuition cost, the candidate or the hiring agency must pay fees for Academy uniforms (\$230) from Iowa Prison Industries and for a meal plan (\$2,330) from Hy-Vee. These costs are outside the control of the ILEA and have steadily risen over the years. The current fee-based structure is not sustainable for the vast majority of law enforcement agencies across Iowa and ultimately results in diminished law enforcement services to the citizens of Iowa.

V. Materials Filed with the Legislative Services Agency

Materials were distributed at or in connection with the meeting and are filed with the Legislative Services Agency. The materials may be accessed from the "Committee Documents" link on the committee's Internet site accessible at the following address:

www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/meetings/documents?committee=39588&ga=ALL

1. ILEA Supplemental information
2. SF 562, Section 29