

Press Conference on Violence in the RiverCity (Peoria/Central IL)

Good afternoon. I'm **Jacob Partee**, CEO of **Speak Out Illinois LLC**. Thank you to everyone who's here: our media partners, law enforcement representatives, community leaders, concerned residents, and families. We gather today not as bystanders—but as partners in the fight for safety and justice in our RiverCity.

We face a hard truth: **violence is not a distant issue**. It's here, and its ripple effects are daily reality in our neighborhoods and homes.

Violent Crime Across the Spectrum

1. Gun Violence, Shootings & Firearms-Related Crimes

- In **2023**, the Illinois State Police seized **17,812 pounds of narcotics**, recovered **718 firearms**, and made over **1,900 arrests** across the state. In **Central Illinois alone**, including Peoria, they recorded **373 pounds of drugs seized**, **27 firearms confiscated**, and **138 arrests**—alongside **27 human trafficking arrests** involving **15 victims**.
- Peoria also saw a troubling uptick in juvenile crime: a **15% rise in juvenile offenses in 2024**, and a **54% increase in juveniles involved in crimes so far in 2025** compared to 2020, with **repeat offenders doubling**.

2. Armed Robbery, Gang Violence & Organized Crime

- Armed robberies remain high-risk scenes. A notable case culminated in a **30-year sentence for a 2023 armed robbery and shooting** in North Peoria.

- Members of organized groups are being held accountable: RICO charges and convictions underscore the presence of violent street gangs in Peoria, including the first guilty pleas and multiple transfers of juvenile gang members to adult court.

3. Violent Crimes Against Women, Children & Families

- Domestic violence cases are particularly harrowing—**Daniel Pace was convicted** for setting his girlfriend on fire, suffering severe burns.
- In another agonizing case, a **babysitter was charged with the First-Degree Murder of an 18-month-old in his care.**
- Sexual abuse persists—a **grooming charge** was filed against a local tattoo artist for sending explicit messages to a minor.

4. Trafficking, Assaults, and Similar Violent Acts

- Neighborhood safety is further compromised by disturbing crimes—an **armed spa robbery spree**: two Peoria men were **indicted federally for violent, armed robberies of massage spas**, where victims were choked, bound with zip ties, and robbed at gunpoint.
- And unexplained, hateful acts continue: a **Planned Parenthood clinic in Peoria was firebombed**, causing over \$1 million in damage.

What We Must Do—Together

1. Invest in Prevention, Not Reaction

We need strong, evidence-backed youth programs, mentorship, and mental health services. Let's help our children envision a future beyond fear. Every dollar spent in prevention saves far more in trauma—something the 2023 drug and weapon interception figures make clear.

2. Prioritize Survivor Support

For trafficking survivors and victims of violence, services must extend beyond intervention—offering housing, legal aid, and holistic care. Karina's Law signals progress—now let's build the infrastructure to support it.

3. Demand Transparency and Trust from Law Enforcement

When force is used—or when arrests are made—communities deserve clear, timely updates. Procedural clarity builds trust and ensures misunderstandings don't harden into resentment.

4. Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration

The ISP's expanded training and trafficking detection efforts show the power of coordinated action. We must replicate that model across other crime areas: guns, drugs, and violence prevention.

5. Enact and Enforce Smart Legislation

Karina's Law is one step—now we need to ensure it's implemented effectively. We should also examine further legislation that stops firearms from reaching abusers, teenage traffickers, or criminals.

Our Commitments, Starting Now

As CEO of Speak Out Illinois, I pledge:

1. **Survivor Resource Line**—a navigation service to connect survivors to immediate, trusted support without barriers.
2. **Youth Empowerment Network**—bringing schools, mentors, clinicians, and local leaders together to interrupt cycles that lead teenagers into violence or trafficking.

Final Call

RiverCity is more than its headlines or crime stats. It's home. It's families. It's the promise of tomorrow. **We refuse to let violence define us.** We will not be passive, we will be precise, and we will persist.

This isn't a rally, it's a reckoning—and accountability, empathy, and action will light the way forward.

Thank you.

Jacob Partee, CEO
Speak Out Illinois LLC