



[President Preckwinkle Announces Sweeping Bond Study](#)

By [Sebastian James](#) at January 12, 2012 | 3:46 pm | [Print](#)



As part of her administration's continued effort to promote effective government and enhance public safety, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle is announcing an in-depth review of how bonds are set, in order to provide equitable access to justice for all county residents.

To further this goal, the president has asked the Cook County [Judicial Advisory Council](#) (JAC) to conduct a six-month, comprehensive study on the issuance of bonds that will collect information and generate recommendations from a cross section of public safety stakeholders.

Currently, judges' release or detention decisions are often made in an instant, without access to the appropriate level of information upon which to base their decision; setting bond amounts is one of the most difficult decisions made by members of the judiciary. One of the JAC's key determinations will be how to provide enhanced pre-trial services that allow judges to make better informed decision on bond amounts.

"Decisions to release someone back into the community with the expectation they will return for court dates must be based on accurate and verifiable information," President Preckwinkle said. "People who are a flight risk after arrest should not be allowed back on the street and bond must be set accordingly. Public safety is the primary goal, irrespective of color, gender, or immigration status."

The recent case of Bob McCann, who was run over by convicted felon Saul Chavez, highlights the need for the JAC study. At his hearing, Chavez received a \$250,000 D-bond – despite the grievous nature of his

crime, a prior felony conviction, and the potential risk of flight. Chavez' family was able to post the required 10 percent, and he never returned to court. Some have tried to blame Chavez' immigration status, but what allowed Chavez to escape prosecution was an attainable bond that didn't take into account his criminal history and flight risk.

"My heart goes out to the McCann family," President Preckwinkle said. "It was a tragedy that could have been avoided. But what isn't fair, or effective, is to use immigration status as a red herring, when this is an issue about public safety for all Cook County residents. Our goal is to keep our communities safe, not by targeting a sub-set of the population, but by ensuring those who should be detained are held in jail, and that our limited resources are not wasted on those charged with minor offenses or those who pose little or no flight risk."

The JAC's review of the bond and detention process is a key component of the president's broader criminal justice reform platform and she welcomes input and participation from [the Board](#) of Commissioners, public safety officials and other stakeholders on this very important subject.

Members of the Judicial Advisory Council include chairwoman Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke, Judge William Hooks, Judge Michael Stuttley (ret.), Victor P. Henderson, Esq., and Virginia Martinez, Esq. The executive director of the Judicial Advisory Council is Juliana Stratton. The Council's findings will be shared with the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, the Board of Commissioners, public safety stakeholders, and the public.