



MEDIA ADVISORY

June 18th, 2026 at 4pm (before the Broome County Legislative Meeting)

Broome County Office Building

JUST Demands End to Jail For-Profit Jail Contracts and Sheriff's Control of the Jail

Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier (JUST) will hold a press conference prior to the Broome County Legislature's June meeting to issue demands protecting the health and wellbeing of people incarcerated in the Broome County Jail. [The Broome County Legislature is scheduled to vote](#) on Sheriff Akshar's heartless request to *jack up jail communication costs to their maximum allowable (but not required) under federal law*. [Communications costs were already high prior to the rate hike](#), with rates increasing by 100% (in the case of text messages), 44% for phone calls, and 50% for video calls. Such huge, discretionary increases--with the Sheriff getting a 44% kickback profit--will further distress and burden the mostly poor families and their incarcerated loved ones. Costs of tablet use also increased. Families pay additional charges between \$4.95 and \$5.95 to add money to incarcerated people's accounts for each transaction.

This comes on the heels of a major outbreak of salmonella at the jail, the state's largest in 40 years, which sickened approximately 400 people or 90% of the incarcerated population and made them more reliant on communication and commissary purchases. While the incarcerated population suffered, the Sheriff profited from his own mismanagement of the private, for profit, out-of-state food and commissary provider. The Sheriff gets a 33% kickback profit on vastly over-priced commissary items, with state law requiring profits be spent on "rehabilitation"--which the Sheriff determines includes lawn mowers, TVs, copier supplies/services, garden supplies, haircuts, employee wages, cable TV, wheelbarrows or whatever else the sheriff decides (ie. a slush fund).

Poor families of incarcerated loved ones should not be forced into subsidizing the Sheriff's budget. Such policies entrench poverty, incentivize incarceration, and perpetuate mass incarceration.

The demands are as follows:

1. **Move the authority to run the jail to a county agency and out of the hands of Sheriff Akshar.** The Sheriff has shown himself incapable and unwilling to run the jail humanely and fiscally responsibly.
2. **Make ALL Jail communications free.** Maintaining ties with family is key to successful reentry for incarcerated people. New York State made phone calls free and unlimited years ago. Broome can do the same.
3. **A complete, public accounting of the Sheriff's Inmate Fund** and the appointment of a board--which includes incarcerated people--to oversee its future use.
4. **Termination of the jail's private, out-of-state for-profit contracts**, namely GTL/Viapath, Trinity Food Service, and the medical provider contracts. Stop outsourcing county jobs.
5. **Reduce the jail population by terminating the county contract that permits the Federal Government** to use the jail as its dumping ground for ICE and other detainees--which cost the County \$2.8 million last year (\$274/day per person cost minus \$110/day Federal reimbursement). Without federal detainees, the jail can shutter an entire pod, saving taxpayers millions.

JUST encourages people to show up with signs to the Broome County Legislative Meeting where the jail communications contract will be considered. It begins at 5pm.