

Below, a composite of the article originally published by the Post Bulletin and the edited version on their web site after their profuse retraction of some of its content. An early version was retrieved from the Wayback Machine (dated March 14, 11:51 am). A later version was retrieved from the Post Bulletin's web site (on March 30, 6:00 pm). Stricken content no longer exists in the later version; underlined content was not in the early version. The strikethroughs and underlines were applied manually and are susceptible to human error. The retraction was published on March 29 and is given here, not to crow but to try to recompense the Center for the injustice done it. Of course, the original story remains in the minds of its readers. The retraction:

The Post Bulletin electronically published articles on March 14 (“Are ‘crimewave’ claims out of place in Rochester?”), and March 15 (“Lawsuit filed after Center of the American Experiment event canceled”), which contained a material factual inaccuracy concerning Mr. Jeffrey Van Nest, a 20-year FBI veteran and current policy fellow for the Center of the American Experiment (CAE).

The articles inaccurately linked Mr. Van Nest to a discredited conspiracy theory with which he has no connection. The March 14 article also included a subheading and a quote from a third party which improperly attributed non-mainstream policy views to Mr. Van Nest, and a similarity between Mr. Van Nest and a racist political organization. The Post Bulletin regrets this inaccuracy and these portrayals and unconditionally retracts them in full.

The March 14 article's subheading and quote also attribute non-mainstream policy views to the Center of the American Experiment and contain an implicit comparison between CAE and the same racist political organization.

To the extent this subheading and this quote could be interpreted as suggesting that CAE holds policy views out of the mainstream, or that the CAE event was in any way comparable to that racist organization's meetings, those interpretations are unequivocally false. As noted above, the Post Bulletin unconditionally retracts these portrayals.

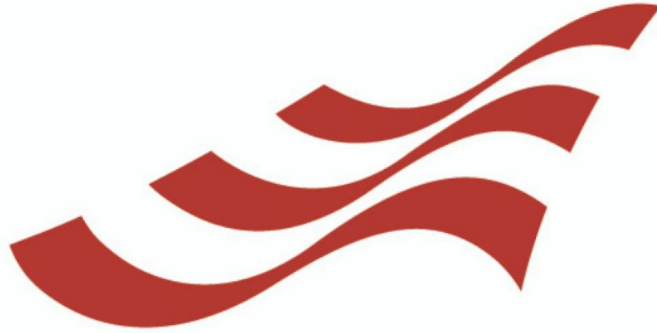
Are 'crime wave' claims out of place in Rochester?

~~Participation of local law enforcement leaders in an upcoming forum raises fears that they endorse fringe views. Or, could their presence help ground the discussion in fact?~~

~~[the previous was version 1]~~

~~The police chief's and sheriff's participation in a public event here on Tuesday has raised concerns among some observers that the departments are willing to associate themselves with politically motivated scare tactics.~~

~~[the previous was version 2; they're both gone, now]~~



AMERICAN EXPERIMENT

By [Molly Work](#)

March 14, 2022 06:30 AM

ROCHESTER — The police chief's and sheriff's participation in a public event here on Tuesday has raised concerns among some observers that the departments are willing to associate themselves with politically motivated scare tactics.

Olmsted County Sheriff Kevin Torgerson and Rochester Police Chief Jim Franklin will join a panel discussion titled "The Crime Crisis," to discuss public safety in Rochester. The event is hosted by the Center of the American Experiment, a conservative think tank headquartered in Minnesota.

~~Jeffrey Van Nest, policy fellow at the Center and former FBI spokesperson, will host the event. Sources interviewed by the Post Bulletin referred to Van Nest as a "right-winger" and attached him to "Pizzagate"—the debunked conspiracy theory—~~

~~conceived during the 2016 presidential election cycle.~~

~~Proponents of Pizzagate falsely claimed that Democratic political elites were tied to a child sex trafficking ring out of a pizza parlor. In a 2017 radio interview with Business Game Changers about Pizzagate, Van Nest didn't quash the theory at any point during the interview and instead responded to and validated reporter Sarah Westall's questions about sex trafficking and satanic abuse.~~

The Rochester event summary asserts that rising crime is threatening Minnesotans' sense of safety. Van Nest said that the Center scheduled the event in Rochester with their local chapter and that the location should not signal to attendees that the crime wave is targeting Rochester specifically.

A Center spokesperson said that rising crime is a statewide issue, claiming that "the sense of lawlessness" is trickling beyond the metro area to suburban cities.



Olmsted County Sheriff
Kevin Torgerson

Torgerson said that a crime crisis has not touched Rochester and that rumors of increased crime are likely exaggerated.

"We're not having...an epidemic of carjackings, or anything like that," he said.

Rochester Police Chief Jim Franklin.

Franklin was unavailable for comment.

Olmsted County DFL Party leader Mark Liebow said he thinks the right-wing event is meant to scare voters about rising crime in the run-up to the election, so they'll vote Republican.

Liebow said.

They're "trying to manufacture a crisis where none exists,"

Rochester Mayor Kim Norton, also a past legislator who was affiliated with the DFL, said she's aware that groups like the Center can use scare tactics and public safety as a tool to divide a community politically. She believes Torgerson's and Franklin's presence on the panel will ensure the discussion is grounded in facts.



Rochester Police Chief Jim
Franklin

“We don't want a wild opinion to come to our community and spread untruths about someone else's view of what's happening,” Norton said. “I want them to know what Rochester’s story is.”

Rochester resident and business owner Abe Sauer expressed his concern that local police representatives are part of a panel that he believes will instill fear in voters for political gain.

“This is a charade,” he said. “By showing up, you legitimize the conversation.”

As an elected official, Torgerson said it is his responsibility to join conversations with any group that invites him to provide a public safety perspective, no matter the political affiliation. Sauer is skeptical.

~~“Would the chief and the sheriff go to a KKK meeting?” he said. “I don't think they would. I would hope they wouldn't.”~~

Editor's note: An earlier version of this story incorrectly referred to a subject's involvement with the discredited “Pizzagate” conspiracy theory. A review of a 2017 radio interview did not support an assertion that the subject was attached to that theory.