

## Safe Surrender DC Starts Sept. 10

The Program Gives Residents with Outstanding Warrants a Chance to Resolve the Record

BY CHRISTINE RUSHTON - Thu, 09/08/2016



Any DC resident with an outstanding warrant can resolve the offense at one of three [Safe Surrender programs](#) in September. The programs in the main courthouse at 500 Indiana Ave. NW takes place on Sept. 10, Sept. 17 and Sept. 24 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Since the program launched in 2007, more than 1,000 people have resolved their warrants – 673 during the 2011 program and 479 during the 2007. Roughly 98 percent of those people walked out of the courthouse that day with an agreed upon resolution, said presiding DC Criminal Division Judge Lynn Leibovitz

The goals of the program: to give people a chance to come in on their own accord and save them facing arrest in front of family and friends; and to preserve the U.S. Marshalls resources and safety by reducing the number of outstanding arrest warrants, she said.

“Any person who gets pulled over and has an expired licensed, they will be run by police and could be arrested at that time,” Leibovitz said, describing a possible scenario. “They will have that hanging over their heads.”

Outstanding warrants for non-violent felonies, misdemeanors, failures to appear for hearings and more burden the courts, law enforcement, attorneys and the people facing those charges, she said. Hosting a series of coordinated Safe Surrender programs every few years brings together judges, police, attorneys, prosecutors, legal help, the U.S. Marshalls and more to clear several lingering issues at once.

Before the programs, the city sends letters to residents with warrants and also operates a database people can search to alert them of their record. Anyone can turn themselves in at any time, too — not just during the Safe Surrender events, Leibovitz said.

“I had a gentleman who had gotten one of our letters about an outstanding warrant from the 1980s,” she said. “He turned himself in before operation safe surrender.”

Willie Jones, another DC resident, turned himself in during the first program in 2007. Since, he has advocated for others to do the same because clearing his record gave him the motivation to clean up from his heroin addiction and get a job.

“He’s an example of a member of the community that used this to put that warrant behind him so he doesn’t have to keep looking over his shoulder,” Leibovitz said.