



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on February 29, 2024

## Athens Mayor Fibs About Riley Murder: Says Not Connected to Immigration, Athens Not a Sanctuary City

It didn't go well for the Democratic mayor of Athens, Georgia, at a news conference to address the murder of Laken Riley.

Cops have charged one of Joe Biden's illegal-alien invaders with the bestial, cold-blooded killing.

Leftist Kelly Girtz tried to explain away the murder by saying it had nothing to do with immigration. He also said Athens is not a sanctuary city for illegals, which is technically true but in practice false.

City residents at the presser erupted in rage.



AP Images  
Kelly Girtz

### Immigration Not the Problem

[Riley was found](#) dead on a jogging trail near the University of Georgia at 12:30 p.m. on February 22. Police have charged Venezuelan border jumper Jose Ibarra with kidnapping, false imprisonment, malice and felony murder, and aggravated battery and assault. He is also charged with hindering a 911 call and concealing a death.

Ibarra's brother [Diego is also an illegal](#). Police nailed him for using a fake green card during their probe of the murder. Like Jose Ibarra, Diego was paroled after border agents caught him.

But at the news conference, Girtz claimed that leftist open-border policies and activism were unrelated to Riley's murder.

"There's been no legislation from this government that's created sanctuary city status," Girtz said, noting that state law forbids such a designation, the [Athens Banner-Herald reported](#).

After bashing GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump for "using the most vile terms about people who were foreign-born," Girtz continued, the newspaper reported:

"The term 'sanctuary city' doesn't have a sole legal or procedural definition," Girtz said to a room jammed with local, state and national media and an estimated dozen protesters. "That term means different things to different people, depending on the context of the discussion."

No sooner had Girtz got those words out than he was drowned out by shouts of "Liar!" and by one protester who told Girtz loudly, "You're a liar and got blood on your hands! ... You allowed this to happen!"

"I caution against conflating immigration and crime — the data demonstrates that the two are not connected," [Girtz falsely claimed](#).



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Later on, a city resident, James Lee, appeared on Fox News' Jesse Watters program. He called Girtz a "left-wing nut job" who violated his oath by protecting illegal aliens instead of Athenians.

"I was surprised," [Lee said](#):

I was ready to be dragged away, because I was gonna say what I was gonna say. I was mad and upset over this senseless murder, and to my surprise, there were a lot of supporters. I didn't know them at all, we met for the first time and they spoke up with me.

## **Might as Well Be a Sanctuary**

Though Athens cannot enact sanctuary policies that violate state law, as a practical matter the city is indeed a sanctuary.

As [NBC affiliate WXIA-TV reported](#), Girtz signed a resolution that all but declared the city a haven for illegals:

The August 2019 Athens resolution, signed by Girtz, said the local government "is welcoming to people from all lands and backgrounds and strives to foster a community where individuals and families of all statuses feel safe, are able to prosper and can breathe free." It added that white nationalists and xenophobes "have been emboldened by some politicians and members of the media" and that "our immigrant and undocumented neighbors, especially those of Latinx heritage, face daily fears and threats from individuals and institutions such as ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]."

And that wasn't the only lure the city created for illegals when then President Trump was trying to secure the border. In 2020, John Williams campaigned to become Athens-Clarke County sheriff on a platform of not cooperating with ICE. In other words, he would shield illegals from deportation.

"It is not my intention, when elected sheriff, to cooperate with those detainers," he said.

Continued Williams:

We can't help with a culture of fear in a community and expect the citizens to respond and help us in situations, because the fact is that a lot of law enforcement is based around community support....

Building relationships is key and if we're antagonizing people because they are undocumented, then they [build] that fear in them, and they're not likely to come to us — not only when we need their help, but when they need our help. So that's not something that we'll be doing. We won't be doing any type of round-ups and we won't be contributing to that culture of fear.

GOP Georgia Representative Mike Collins, [who wrote](#) on X that the "blood of Laken Riley is on the hands of Joe Biden, Alejandro Mayorkas, and the government of Athens-Clarke County," explained that Ibarra knew he'd be safe in Athens.

"When José Antonio Ibarra fled the sanctuary of NYC, he knew his next safe haven was Athens, GA,"



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Collins wrote on X. “Their virtue signaling and advertising worked as intended. You’d have to be living in a cartoon universe to see it any other way.”

Also in Athens, of course, was his brother, a criminal who used a fake green card to get a job at the University of Georgia. It fired him after he couldn’t produce secondary documentation.

President Joe Biden, who incessantly tweeted about the overdose death of career criminal George Floyd, has yet to address the murder of an American by one of the people that he and Democrats say [they care about most](#).

H/T: [The Post Millennial](#)

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