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Lawsuits filed against gangs, seeking money and property

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Kankakee County State's Attorney Jim Rowe on Monday announced plans to "dismantle the gang networks," saying he's going after them in civil court.

Rowe filed three lawsuits against two gangs and 67 members implicated in 147 offenses, most occurring in the last three years.

"We did not randomly select who to charge," Rowe said. "We worked with law enforcement to identify the most dangerous ones who pose a great nuisance to the quality of life in our county."

Provisions in the Illinois Street Gang Terrorism Omnibus Prevention Act allow Rowe to go after the assets of the gangs and their members — "the cars and houses from which they commit these crimes — and if they violate the civil injunction, we will put them in jail."

"We will use every law at our disposal to go after drug dealers and gang bangers."

The alleged offenses committed include delivery of a controlled substance, aggravated unlawful use of a firearm from a vehicle (drive-by shooting), aggravated battery, attempted murder, armed robbery, domestic battery, burglary, aggravated discharge of a firearm, unlawful possession of a firearm by a street gang member and home invasion.

"We are hoping this puts a dent into the criminal acts these gang members commit, helping to keep the community safer," said Jay Etzel, investigations commander for Kankakee Police.

These three lawsuits ask for an "order prohibiting gang members from congregating in public and in vehicles together, engaging in the possession and use of weapons and illicit narcotics, graffiti, 'throwing' gang signs, violent behavior and other activities generally associated with street gangs."

Rowe also is seeking monetary damages from the gangs to offset the costs incurred by taxpayers and law enforcement in combating gang crime.

Suing gang members has a history

