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## Suing gang members has a history

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In 2012, McHenry County and the city of Harvard took action against a half dozen members of a gang that had caused them headaches.

They used the 1993 Illinois Street Gang Terrorism Omnibus Prevention Act to clean up the problem.

Kankakee County State's Attorney Jim Rowe is hoping that will happen here as well after filing lawsuits against 67 known members of two local gangs on Monday.

Rowe said the county and city of Kankakee took action to protect the community.

Each person named had at least two convictions, including one felony, within a five-year span.

This act makes it difficult for them to gather in groups, own guns and recruit new members. Wearing gang colors, spray painting gang graffiti and flashing gang symbols also will cause them problems with police.

McHenry County Assistant State's Attorney Jana Blake prosecuted the suits and said they got the results they wanted.

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The county and Harvard settled with the six, who each agreed to pay \$12,000. They were asking for \$50,000 in restitution.

"As far as I know, no money has been collected, but it isn't about the money," Blake said. "It is about making the area inhospitable so gang members leave."

Blake said that is what happened.

In the suits filed by Rowe's office, he asked for compensatory and punitive damages, court costs to be paid by the individual and them to leave the gang.

Rowe said the amount of damages asked for will be based upon a defendant's background and based upon a judge's ruling after a hearing.

"I can't predict how that will go," Rowe said. "We are going to argue and fight as best we can, and hope for results that make a difference."

With the number of people sued, Rowe said it takes a big portion of each gang's leadership thus making it hard for the remaining members.

"It would greatly inhibit the ability of gang members to travel in vehicles and congregate in public," he said.

The hearings for the 67 people named in the suits is scheduled for Aug. 8.

Lawsuits filed against gangs, seeking money and property