

Sanity Check

ICE DON'T RUN ON ICE

After 9/11, more than a dozen federal agencies were placed in a single organizational structure. We call it the Department of Homeland Security (or **DHS**), and funding it has become a big problem. By placing fifteen agencies under a [single administrative umbrella](#), we have made it very difficult to manage how we spend our tax dollars to meet so many different objectives.

Different parts of DHS are charged with managing the security of our airports, coastal waters, land borders, computer systems, payment systems, health systems, federal spending, and our heads of state. It is also charged with managing our response to natural disasters.



Minneapolis, 2025

And there's more, it's just far too much to list here (see [DHS.GOV](#) for details). Attempting to balance how much we spend on each goal, and what those goals should be, is just too much for Congress to sort out in a timely fashion, and so DHS must be split apart again to make effective leadership *possible*.

The recent budget impasse, in March 2026, was driven by widespread disagreement about the scope and mission of two of the DHS agencies: Immigration and Customs Enforcement (**ICE**) and Customs and Border Protection (**CBP**). Both of these agencies are currently attempting to remove people from this country if they lack the proper citizenship status or visitation rights. Current estimates indicate there are around **12 million** people who are not in this country legally. No government in modern history has attempted to detain or remove that many people from within their nation. In the Nazi era, the German government detained, and ultimately killed, somewhere around 6 million people over the course of ten years. Removing 12 million people is, simply put, ***not an achievable goal*** for the current administration, even with all of the advantages of modern technology.

In a little over a year, while using heavy-handed and often illegal means, ICE and BCP have managed to detain around 60,000 people. That's a pretty reliable number, as most of them are currently housed in government facilities awaiting deportation. The discredited former head of DHS, Kristi Noem, likes to claim that another one or two million people have "self-deported" over the past year. This claim is, at best, a very unreliable number as there is no basis for tracking such motion beyond wishful thinking. While these mass detentions may lead to a greater number of deportations, there is certainly no way to remove all of those targeted, and there are not enough beds to house those who are already detained, much less those who may be swept up in any future "raids" in our communities.

The current path ICE and BCP are on is not viable. We have to recognize the goals are not achievable, and the cost is not supportable, even if we abandon all of the other missions assigned to DHS. Yet, we must address our immigration problems, and do so within our means and in accordance with the values we have enshrined in our Constitution and in our body of laws. As both agencies have discovered, our commitment to due process has largely stalled their progress. To get the system moving again, we must reconstitute our immigration courts and return to addressing the problem as a **civil matter**, and stop the effort to criminalize vast numbers of people.

Historically, immigration issues in our country were handled in civil courts; it is only in the past year or so that a lack of legal status has been redefined as a matter for *criminal* prosecution. To be clear, anyone who commits an actual crime must be apprehended, prosecuted, imprisoned, and ultimately deported. The mere act of existing on our soil, without the proper permission, cannot be redefined as some sort of felony in order to subject large numbers of people, most of whom are not guilty of any crime, to actual **imprisonment**. We have to recognize that calling it a “detainment” does not soften the circumstance of a person who is removed from their life and placed under guard until they are shipped out.

To restore a sane immigration system, we need to follow the rule of law, and assemble courts that can process a large number of cases. The current administration fired nearly 100 immigration judges over the last year, and then hired forty new judges willing to impose their cruel agenda without question. This represents the loss of a significant amount of legal expertise required to keep the system flowing. Emptying these bench positions and replacing them with inexperienced yes men is an obvious attempt to “monkey wrench” or disable a system that allowed those seeking a legitimate path forward to proceed. We must restore this path with the clear objective of screening out any actual, convicted criminals. Not an easy task, but one that may be achieved if we are willing to work in both the civilian and criminal courts, with each side focused on the cases that fall within their jurisdiction.

As firmly established by statistical evidence, undocumented immigrants commit crimes at less than half the rate of our native citizens. Anyone who is serious about affecting the crime rate in this nation will agree that devoting the lion’s share of federal funding to addressing the smallest proportion of crime is not going to move us in a productive direction. Nor is locking up 100% of the immigrant population to get the 15% who may commit crimes off our streets. The numbers just cannot add up. Insisting on the current path betrays both the goals of our law enforcement community and the general population. Instead of asking how many people were ripped from the streets and placed in a detention facility, we must demand to know how many actual convicted felons were apprehended and deported; the bulk are found in our prison system, not in random urban locations, work sites, and agricultural fields. Then, we need to ask how the efforts of ICE and CBP are affecting the total crime rate, and evaluating how much we are spending, and where we are spending it when we try to move that needle.

Sending an undocumented immigrant to another country and placing them in a prison costs more than \$100,000 per person, per year. It would be less expensive to give each immigrant a full-ride scholarship to one of our state level universities. Sending them to school, even with remedial education, would help us build our tax base and economy. And, this is just how far off-course Stephen Miller and his henchmen have taken us. Using Air Force planes to send detainees to third world prisons is just not a sane option. We can begin with that understanding.

So, what are the baseline “first principles” we can begin with? I’ll offer the following:

1. **No Masks.** In our daily lives, the only people who wear masks outside of a medical establishment are either **criminals** or **terrorists**. That simple fact disables any attempt to impose order on what begins as a difficult pursuit and often escalates to a traumatic interaction for all involved. The official party line given for this epic mistake is something to the tune of “our agents face doxxing if they show their faces, putting the lives of their families in danger.” This is a stretch, to say the least. When an officer of the law puts on that mask, they violate the social contract that allows them to

carry and deploy a weapon in their line of duty. If they cannot be held accountable for their actions, they are no different than any other criminal or terrorist.

First, let us admit that not many undocumented immigrants are in a position to snap pictures, research the identities and contact information of ICE and CBP officers, and then publicize those personal details using advanced technology. Wealthier American citizens, on the other hand, are horrified by what they are witnessing, and have proven themselves willing and capable of doing that homework and posting the results. That will not end until this misguided effort is abandoned.

Mr. Miller's henchmen also like to claim the brave ICE and BCP staff are working with some dangerous ***hombres*** and face a special sort of risk. Again, most of the people detained on the street are not criminals. Those released from our correctional facilities may pose a risk, but not so much if they are detained *before* they are returned to the street. Given Mr. Homan's blanket assertion that his agents have no intention of giving up their masks, let us agree that ICE and BCP agents **do not** face any challenge unfamiliar to the many probation officers, social workers, correctional officers, members of every other law enforcement agency, firefighters, nurses, and any number of brave Americans who face the risk and challenge of ***their*** jobs. They have simply decided to treat people in a humane fashion that supports the strength of the social fabric instead of tearing it apart.

> **If you aren't willing to do the job without wearing a mask, don't take the job.**

2. **No Guns.** Roaming bands of federal agents carrying military grade firepower are never going to make anyone's life any safer. Just ask the people of Minnesota, one of the *least* turbulent cities in our fair country. In the Minneapolis metro area, less than 75 people were murdered last year, in an urban population of more than three million. On average, far more people will die in automobile accidents in that state over the course of a year. If Renee Good and Alex Pretti could testify, they would agree that arming these agents is not necessary. Given the lowered hiring standards, and the lack of meaningful training, continuing this practice will not produce a good outcome for anyone.

Second, the vast majority of undocumented immigrants are not violent, and the agents sent around the country do not have much skin in the game. Separating families on the street, at gunpoint, is not a good look for anyone, especially if they are wearing a badge. The obvious solution is to instruct any members of ICE or CBP to withdraw and contact local law enforcement if they encounter any sort of armed or violent resistance. Local police know they can and will be held accountable for any death or mayhem they create. Just ask [Derek Chauvin](#), who should be preparing to welcome some new cell mates after the Minnesota shootings. Instead, we have federal officers hiding behind a cloak of anonymity that destroys the social contract every armed officer must live by.

Just as there are no military solutions to our drug enforcement problem, there are no aspects of our immigration issue that can be solved with a bullet. The real miracle is how few ICE and CBP officers have been shot at, given the more than 300 million guns floating around in our nation. That luck will not hold out forever, and it's well past time we faced that.

> **If you aren't willing to do the job without a gun, don't take the job.**

3. **No Camps.** The United States already imprisons more people than any other nation. We have a massive infrastructure for the warehousing of people, and yet we aren't very good at rehabilitating the criminal elements who wind up in these facilities. The recidivism rate is unlikely to change, as we still aren't providing many alternatives to a life of crime. Throwing immigrants into that system is not likely to produce a good result, unless our goal is to transform these people into the newest members of our criminal underclass. The Correctional Officers, on the ground level, understand this. It is part of the reason we now have "detainment centers" for those swept up in the latest raids. These new centers are, of course, built and maintained by the "for profit" prison companies who only promise to keep **their** bottom line moving in the right direction.

The companies building these new centers were plotting to [convert distressed warehouses](#) to hold vast numbers of people. Contemplate that for a moment. It should remind you of the holds in the ships used to bring human cargo to our shores a few hundred years ago. Under the glare of the public eye, they are abandoning those warehouses – after paying far too much for them in the first place. Given the juvenile approach of the current administration, it only makes sense for them to funnel all the money for new facilities through the cartel awarded all of the contracts: CoreCivic, the GEO Group, and now, Amentum. The first two generated some good dividends for Mr. Trump, who has [invested significant sums of money](#) in those stocks. He also has some investments in Amentum, Axon, Plantir, and most companies in line for DHS contracts. Adolph never thought of monetizing his camps, so I guess we have a purpose for all that stable genius. Too bad it leads right down to the bottom of an amoral and un-American cesspool.

> **If you aren't willing to protect everybody's freedom, don't take the job.**

Faced with the logistical impossibility of detaining millions of people, the dullards in charge have turned to GPS ankle monitors. Not that they have enough of those to make a difference in their goals, unless it is to [drive people to commit suicide](#).

It's long past time we faced the hard, cold reality of the mass deportation agenda: at best, we may only achieve the sort of [Pyrrhic victory](#) that would doom our economy, our culture, and our entire population to financial and ethical ruin. Mr. Trump has spent his entire life proving that he is the best at snatching defeat from the jaws of victory – and we must not go down with him.

What can I do? [Contact your congressional representatives](#), and tell them: **No Masks, No Guns, and No Camps.** Or no votes. We call the shots, and we can set the terms of engagement.

— Steven Peterson, 2026