



Lawyers' Committee For Rhode Island

Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 7211
The Rhode Island Community Protection Act
(Rep. Felix)

Joe Gaeta, Chair, Legislation and Policy Committee
Lawyers Committee for Rhode Island

Hearing of the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee
March 4, 2026

House Bill 7211, the Rhode Island Community Protection Act, does two things. It prohibits the routine use of masks by any law enforcement officer—federal, state, or local—operating in the state. And it requires officers to wear identification showing their employing agency and a badge number or another way for the public to identify who they are.

Both requirements are subject to common-sense exceptions. Officers can still wear masks or other protective face coverings when their health and safety require it, or when it is operationally necessary. They need not wear identification during undercover activities. This bill is intended to reflect widely accepted best practices in policing. It is not intended to change the way our law enforcement officers keep Rhode Island communities safe.

If that's the case, why do we even need a bill like this?

Let me say first and unequivocally that this legislation has not been made necessary by the actions of Rhode Island law enforcement. In 2020, Rhode Island law enforcement agencies in concert with the Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association, adopted "Twenty for 2020," a set of promises to ensure the public's faith in Rhode Island police departments.¹ The Community Protection Act is consistent with these promises.

Rhode Island law enforcement agencies deserve credit for the leadership they have shown, focusing on training, transparency, and communication. For example, in Rhode Island, officers have already committed to providing their names and badge numbers when requested. The Twenty for 2020 did not include anything about wearing masks because the routine use of masks is not a practice in Rhode Island.

¹ *The Twenty for 2020*, Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association, June 25, 2020.



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This legislation is needed because over the last year, federal law enforcement agencies—primarily Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)—have begun to use masks routinely and concealing their identities during everyday law enforcement activities.

The safety of ICE officers is not what caused ICE to change its practices. No, the routine use of masks by ICE is intended, as a federal judge Boston has found, “to terrorize Americans into quiescence.”² We have seen that terror in the faces of an intern being pulled from the car of one of our Superior Court judges in front of the Licht Judicial Complex, of a graduate student being abducted off the streets near Tufts University, and in countless other scenes across the country.

These new tactics are making us less safe. When people are afraid of the police, they are less likely to trust them when they need them most. As the International Association of Chiefs of Police said last year:

[T]he use of face coverings and the absence of visible identification during enforcement operations can create confusion, fear, and mistrust among community members and responding agencies, potentially increasing operational risks and eroding public confidence; [and]

[C]learly visible agency affiliation and unique identifiers—such as badge numbers or alphanumeric codes—enhance both accountability and officer safety, and align with long-standing policing practices³

And more, according to the FBI, criminals are “using ICE’s enhanced public profile and media coverage to their advantage to target vulnerable communities and commit criminal activity.”⁴

Routine masking not only makes us less safe, it also violates our constitutional rights. A federal judge in West Virginia just last month concluded that the routine use of masks violates the Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable searches and seizures, and the Fifth Amendment right to due process.⁵ Prosecutors have explained how masked policing

² *American Association of University Professors v. Rubio*, Findings of Fact and Ruling of Law, 25-cv-10685, (D.Mass Sept. 30, 2025) (Young, D.J.).

³ *Promoting Transparency, Accountability, Coordination, and Officer Safety in Immigration Enforcement Operations*, Resolution of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, August 2025.

⁴ *Criminal Actors Impersonate ICE Agents to Commit Violent Crime*, Public Safety Awareness Report, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Oct. 17, 2025.

⁵ *Urquilla-Ramos v. Trump*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 26-cv-00066 (S.D.W.V., Feb. 19, 2026). (Goodwin, D.J.)



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undermines criminal prosecutions, making it harder for them to satisfy their constitutional duty to disclose evidence that is favorable and material to a defendant.⁶

These tactics are now being used by a small minority of those engaged in law enforcement, but by design, this administration is publicizing and promoting ICE to strike fear in all of us.

If the General Assembly passes the Rhode Island Community Protection Act, it will join states that are saying clearly and unequivocally "NO." No to ICE using these tactics. No to any law enforcement agency operating in Rhode Island that would deprive us of our liberty under the cloak of anonymity and force of terror.

As that same federal judge in West Virginia said last month: "When the state reaches out and takes hold of a human being and deprives him of his liberty, that act must present itself as the people's act. Not eventually. Not upon later inquiry. At the moment it occurs." By passing the Community Protection Act, we can say loudly and clearly that anonymous arrests by unknown agents are not done with the consent of the people.

⁶*United States v. State of California*, Brief Amicus Curiae of Prosecutors Alliance Action, 25-cv-10999 (C.D. Cal., Jan 6, 2026).

IDEAS

When ICE sends its people, they're not sending their best

Repressive enforcement agencies are often stocked with underachievers.

By Elizabeth Svoboda

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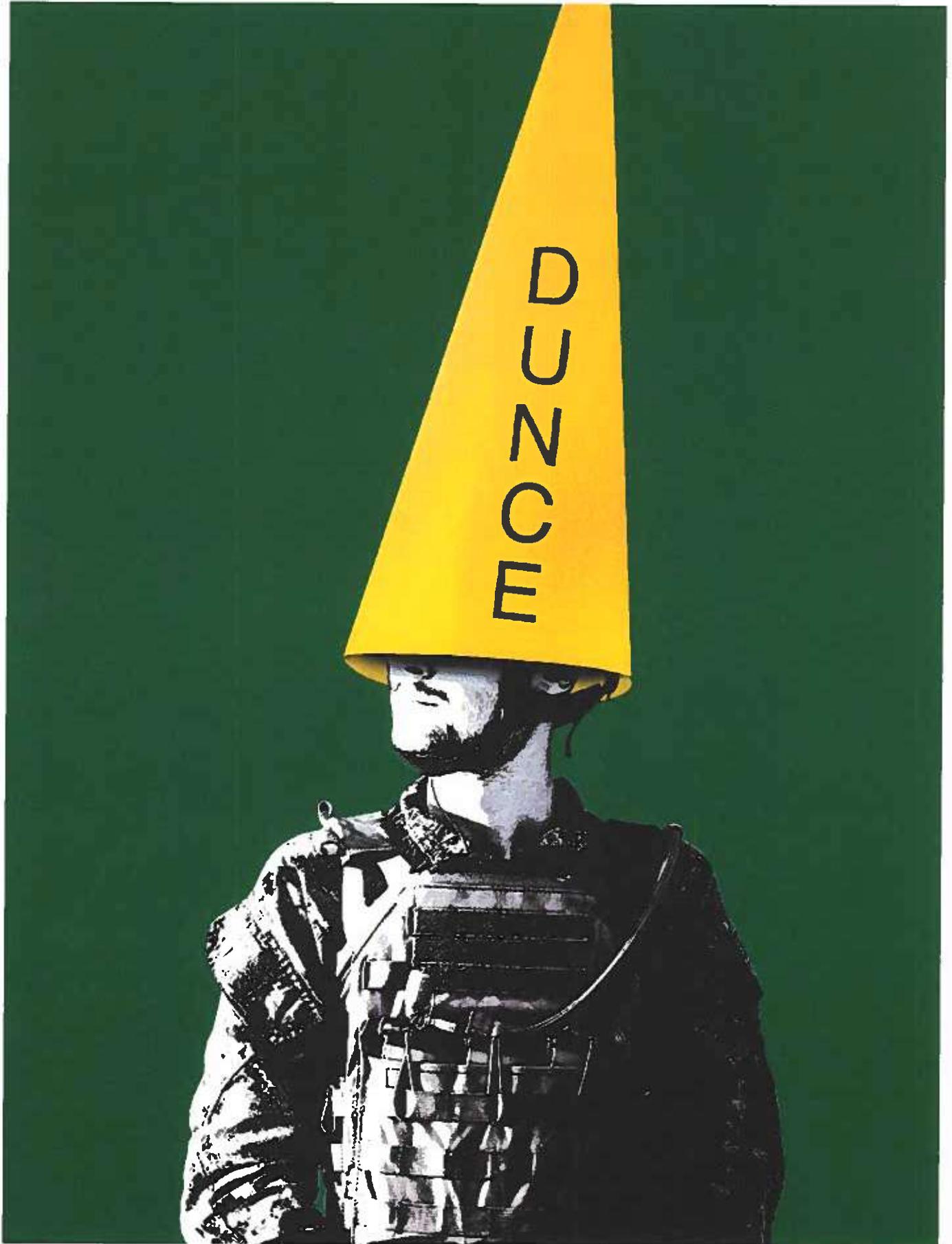


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LUIS G. RENDON/GLOBE STAFF; ADOBE

Elizabeth Svoboda, a contributing writer for Globe Ideas, is the author of “What Makes a Hero?: The Surprising Science of Selflessness.”

As Tricia McLaughlin, a Department of Homeland Security official, looks to add 10,000 officers to Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s ranks by January, she has teamed up with actor Dean Cain for a larger-than-life recruitment pitch. “Superman,” McLaughlin [told KTLA](#) news in Los Angeles, “is encouraging Americans to become real-life superheroes by answering their country’s call to join the brave men and women of ICE.”

So far, though, recruits who enter ICE training have fallen well short of the superhero standard. About half of new recruits [cannot pass an open-book, open-notes exam](#) that covers immigration law and the Fourth Amendment, and more than a third [fail a basic physical fitness test](#) that requires them to do push-ups and sit-ups and run a mile and a half. “It’s pathetic,” an anonymous ICE official told The Atlantic.

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This is happening even though ICE is offering recruits [tens of thousands of dollars](#) in signing bonuses and student loan repayments.

To political scientists like the University of Copenhagen’s Adam Scharpf, ICE’s quality-control issues aren’t surprising — they’re what you would expect for an agency with characteristics like those of a secret police force. Officers in such agencies worldwide, Scharpf and his colleague Christian Gläbel report, have long been underachievers compared with those in the regular police or military. Scharpf and Gläbel’s new book on their research, [“Making a Career in Dictatorship: The Secret Logic Behind Repression and Coups,”](#) comes out in February.

ICE may not fit the classic definition of a secret police force that covertly carries out repression, like East Germany's Stasi or the Soviet Union's KGB. But the tactics it has used in enforcing deportation orders this year — hiding officers' identities with masks, arresting people without probable cause, and forcibly "disappearing" detainees to a Salvadoran megaprison — have chilling historical parallels.

Secret police differ from their standard counterparts in that they operate sub rosa to enforce a strongman's will. They [target the leader's stated opponents](#); carry out arbitrary searches and seizures; conceal officers' identities; and conduct mass surveillance of populations they single out.

While officers like these may present as elite forces, Scharpf and Gläbel argue that just the opposite is true. Secret police officers, they've found, are typically lower-skilled than their peers, and they often join the force after their job prospects elsewhere have dried up.

"It's not so much that they are psychopaths or sadists," Scharpf says. "They are actually ordinary individuals that are trying to solve their career problem." Secret police service offers down-on-their-luck recruits a fresh start — and a chance to ascend in the ranks by embracing onerous duties like violent or warrantless arrests, duties that others may find objectionable.

'Individuals that lack skills and intellect'

A scholar of dictatorship, Scharpf has plowed through scores of books on autocracies. Several years ago, he noticed a through line that surprised him. "What I frequently stumbled upon," he says, "were statements that the secret police was dominated by individuals described as mediocre, as low-skilled, as uneducated."

Initially, Scharpf took these claims with a grain of salt. Secret police, he knew, were vital to autocratic rulers' interests, broadcasting and enforcing a regime's dominance. But

when he traveled to Argentina to talk with specialists on the country's former military dictatorship, one expert raised the topic again, noting that Argentinian secret police often didn't make the grade in other jobs.

Scharpf started wondering if he should investigate the idea. "I was like, Yeah, that sounds superintriguing and also superstrange," he remembers. "I was asking myself, why would a leader or regime staff such an important organization with individuals that lack skills and intellect?"

Since no one had systematically tested this underachiever hypothesis, Scharpf and Gläbel carried out [their own study](#). They combed through Argentinian government and army archives to assemble detailed career profiles of more than 4,000 army officers, including some who joined Battalion 601, the secret police force that served Argentina's military autocracy in the 1970s and '80s.

As Scharpf and Gläbel scanned the data, what stood out was the clear aptitude gap between secret police officers and members of the normal officer corps. The lower an officer's class rank at graduation from the national training academy, the more likely they were to serve in Battalion 601 later on.

In organizations like the Argentinian military and ordinary police, the cream rose to the top: The most promising young officers ascended in the ranks, while the less competent stayed stuck at the bottom. For those underperforming officers, Battalion 601 service proved an enticing prospect. Not only were they welcomed in, they often [ascended steadily in the ranks](#) and had longer careers than their peers in the regular military.

Secret police recruits' limited career prospects work to the advantage of strongman leaders. "If a government seeks personnel that is willing to do even the dirtiest work, it will obviously not recruit high flyers with secure futures," Scharpf says. "They have little incentive to shoulder the psychological cost of abductions, intimidation, and violence."

When Gläbel and Scharpf broadened their investigation's scope, studying some other historic units like the Soviet Union's NKVD, the Nazi Gestapo, and communist Romania's Securitate, much the same pattern emerged. After less-skilled candidates' job options dwindled, new secret police careers helped them salvage their livelihood.

Franz Stangl, who commanded the Treblinka death camp in occupied Poland during World War II, is a revealing case in point. He became a Gestapo officer (and later joined the SS) after his career as a weaver petered out in the 1930s. As a result, his professional prospects rose, as did his involvement in the Nazi regime's most secret and horrific operations.

Recruits with fewer career options, like Stangl, tend to be more loyal, compliant, and willing to carry out "dirty work," knowing their advancement depends on it. "There's a bottom-up incentive for people to signal, 'Hey, I know my back [is] to the wall. So what can I do to turn this around?'" Scharpf says. "They have this absolute desire to get the second chance." That desire compels them to volunteer for a range of oppressive duties, from [hunting down dissidents](#) to arresting and deporting thousands.

Once forged, the bond between underachieving officers and autocrats who salvage their careers is not easily broken, and it can [prompt escalating misconduct](#) as these officers engage in ever more violence and repression to prove their worth.

'You would need to offer this workforce an exit'

The researchers suspect that underachieving, second-chance dynamics are at work today in agencies such as ICE and Russia's FSB (Federal Security Service). ICE acknowledges its own appeal to struggling workers; like some other government agencies, it offers a [separate hiring process](#) for "federal employees whose job, agency or department was eliminated and are eligible for priority over other applicants."

But so far, Scharpf and Gläbel have been unable to study agencies like these in much depth, mostly because — for obvious reasons — current leaders prefer to keep detailed recruitment and skill data under wraps.

“It’s pretty unlikely that you would get similar or comparably fine-grained data for a regime that is still in power,” Scharpf says. He also fears that digging too deeply into active units could put him at risk. If he went after recent Russian data, he says, “the regime would surely not just idly sit back.”

Gläbel and Scharpf hope that continued research on the psychology and motivations of secret police, especially those in rank-and-file positions, will reveal more about how to negate the perceived benefits that members enjoy. “You would need,” Scharpf says, “to offer this workforce an exit. It could be just offering them extra options by training them so they can be successful in a different labor market.”

But he recognizes that under autocratic regimes, it’s hard to say who would be best positioned to sever these workers’ deep-rooted allegiance to their bosses or give them career options that would lure them away for good. “It’s very unlikely that authoritarian figures will run out of loyal helpers anytime soon,” Scharpf says, “and so it’s probably better to try not to have them in power in the first place.”

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Big Budget Act Creates a ‘Deportation Industrial Complex’ That Will be Hard to Dismantle

By Margy O’Herron

Published on August 6, 2025

Editor’s Note

This article is included in the [Immigration Law: Syllabus Supplement](#).

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The so-called [One Big Beautiful Act](#) allocates more than [\\$170 billion](#) over four years for border and interior enforcement, with a stated goal of deporting 1 million immigrants each year. That is more than the yearly budget for all local and state law enforcement agencies combined across the entire United States. The bill adds billions of dollars to border enforcement, but the largest percentage increase goes to finding, arresting, detaining, and deporting immigrants already living in the U.S., most of whom have not committed a crime and many of whom have had lawful status.

Although the population of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. has remained fairly [constant](#) over the past 10 years, overall immigration has [increased](#) since the 1970s, and increased funding has been needed to fairly and efficiently address that growth. But the scale and focus of the increases are startling. The July 2025 funding package appropriates huge sums for deportations while neglecting processes that are needed for a fair and workable immigration system, such as immigration judges to ensure citizens or immigrants are not erroneously deported. The result will be a lopsided, enforcement-only machine. Most detention facilities will be [operated](#) by for-profit private prison corporations and other private contractors, creating strong economic and political interests that will make the new apparatus very difficult to dismantle.

Taken together long-term detention and surveillance contracts, rapid hiring increases for enforcement, and new monetary incentives for reprioritizing law enforcement on immigration will create a deportation-industrial complex—an enforcement machine with financial and political constituencies that will outlast this administration.

Scale and Recipients of the July 2025 Funding

The biggest piece of the pie for enforcement operations in the United States will go to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to arrest, detain, and deport immigrants. Congress gave ICE \$75 billion over four years, approximately \$18.7 billion each year. Added to the \$10 billion Congress already appropriated ICE for fiscal year 2025 in March, ICE now has \$28.7 billion at its disposal this year. That \$28.7 billion figure is nearly triple ICE's entire budget for FY24.

Two-thirds of ICE's funding – \$45 billion over four years – will be used to detain immigrants, potentially more than [100,000](#) people per year. The \$11.25 billion added to ICE's annual detention budget is a 400% increase from last year and exceeds the Department of Justice [budget request](#) for Fiscal Year 2026 for the entire federal prison system, which holds [155,000](#) people.

The law explicitly allows ICE to build more facilities to jail families, often mothers with their children, and does not align with a decades-old [settlement](#) that addresses the treatment of immigrant children.

The budget also gives approximately \$30 billion over four years to ICE to track down, arrest, and deport immigrants, allowing it to hire [10,000](#) new officers. That amount is a 300% increase over ICE's entire \$10 billion prior-year budget.

The bill also allocates billions of dollars to Customs and Border Protection (CBP), which already received a \$20 billion dollar appropriation for fiscal year 2025. The July funding bill gives CBP almost \$65 billion more over 4 years, nearly \$47 billion of which is earmarked for continued construction of a physical wall along the U.S.-Mexico border . This is a stark increase from the amount [allocated](#) to the border wall during the first Trump administration, when Congress appropriated \$5 billion and President Trump ordered the Department of Defense to divert an additional \$10 billion.

The remaining \$18.2 billion for CBP in the July funding bill will go to hiring, facilities, technology, and surveillance. Surveillance of border communities already raises [significant privacy concerns](#) that CBP has failed to address. A funding surge will enable CBP to supercharge those efforts, further invading the privacy of citizens and noncitizens alike and eroding trust in the government.

Additional funds to support immigration enforcement go to state and local jurisdictions with more than \$10 billion for border-related law enforcement support. Congress also gave the Department of Defense \$1 billion and established an unrestricted \$10 billion fund that the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security can allocate for any border enforcement purposes.

The administration has already significantly increased pressure on local jurisdictions to enter [agreements](#) with ICE to assist with immigration enforcement. Funneling huge sums to state and

local jurisdictions will likely divert them from their core law enforcement priorities. The \$10 billion unrestricted fund – an amount equal to ICE’s entire budget last year – gives DHS a huge immigration enforcement carrot to dangle in front of DHS components, private contractors, and local and state law enforcement agencies, enticing them to seek those funds to carry out DHS priorities with minimal accountability.

How does this compare to other law-enforcement spending?

The \$170 billion price tag for immigration enforcement eclipses other law enforcement expenditures at the federal, state, and local level. It is more than the [annual expenditures](#) on police by state and local governments in all 50 states and the District of Columbia combined.

Even the slice that goes just to ICE this year – nearly \$29 billion – [exceeds the budgets](#) for all other non-immigration federal law enforcement functions put together, eclipsing funding to agencies whose law enforcement missions involve pursuing terrorists, violent criminals, sex offenders, fentanyl and other drug traffickers, and gun traffickers.

Does the entire immigration system receive funding?

No. The law substantially increases funds for deportations without providing any money to make the system more fair or functional. While the administration is planning to deport a million immigrants each year, the law does not significantly increase access to the immigration courts – which already have a [backlog](#) of nearly 4 million cases – to assess whether they are [citizens](#) or otherwise [entitled to stay](#) in the United States.

In fact, the funding bill caps hiring of new immigration judges over the next three and a half years at 800 new judges. That’s a 14% increase compared to a 400% increase in funding for immigration detention centers. The disparity signals a plan to dispense with due process in deportations or to let immigrants languish in detention centers while waiting for a hearing. The current corps of immigration judges is already stretched desperately thin, particularly in the wake of the administration’s termination of [65](#) immigration judges, all of whom are [career](#) employees.

The administration has also [moved to halt](#) all legal orientation and support programs that help vulnerable immigrants navigate the complex immigration system, including programs that help children and families separated during the first administration. In addition, there is no money in the bill to support the processing of lawful immigration or citizenship applications by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which already has a record 11.3 million pending cases.

The result will be a lopsided, enforcement-only machine.

Who is ICE targeting for arrest and detention?

Although the administration repeatedly said it is deporting the “worst of the worst,” its enforcement efforts are [sweeping in](#) many people with no criminal records to meet the White House goal of arresting 3,000 immigrants a day. ICE also changed its [policy](#) to allow arrests in places that had been considered off-limits, so now agents are arresting [mothers in front of their children](#) as they take them to school, [immigrants as they go to church](#), and asylum seekers when they seek [protection in immigration courts](#).

The administration has also abruptly changed the rules. Immigrants who applied for and were granted legal or protected status have seen that status terminated and are now targets of the administration’s enforcement actions as well. They include immigrants who were lawfully [paroled](#) into the country, along with people with [temporary protected status](#) from countries experiencing ongoing civil unrest or environmental disasters. The same is true for individuals whose deportation had been deferred for humanitarian reasons such as children who are awaiting visas because they were [abandoned or abused](#). The government is moving swiftly to arrest, detain, and deport them. The surge of new funding will increase the number of people it can target.

What do these allocations signal about the administration’s priorities?

The administration argues that ramped-up immigration enforcement is [needed](#) to improve public safety and national security and that it is prioritizing immigration enforcement over all other law enforcement efforts, even though research indicates that [immigrants do not drive up crime rates](#). Nevertheless, the administration has [pulled FBI, drug, and gun agents away](#) from their core missions to help pursue immigrants. It also has cut [crime prevention programs](#) that supported efforts to reduce violence and criminal justice research across 48 states and territories. For fiscal year 2026, the administration is proposing further funding cuts, including [eliminating 1,500 FBI employees, defunding other law enforcement agencies, and cutting vital programs](#) designed to keep Americans safe.

In short, all other federal public safety efforts now take a back seat to arresting and detaining immigrants – the [vast majority](#) of whom do not have a criminal record. Similarly, the administration’s funding allocation makes clear that deportation is the top priority, even if other core values – like due process to ensure the law is accurately applied – may be compromised.

What are the risks of the rapid, massive funding surge?

ICE will likely rush to spend its full allocation of funds, but it takes more than money to build detention facilities, hire additional staff, and buy equipment. It also requires staff to do the hiring

and to ensure compliance with rules governing hiring and procurement. The rush to spend money fast is likely to result in large amounts of funding flowing to private contractors, with pressure to cut corners.

Private prison firms will [reap most of the financial benefits](#) of the detention budget, as nearly 90 percent of people in ICE custody are already held in for-profit prisons. Months before the president signed the budget bill in July, ICE already had [solicited contracts](#) from private firms, setting up an expedited contract process. The two largest for-profit companies have been significant financial supporters of the [president](#) and one has [hired](#) several former high-level ICE officials. Oversight of these private facilities is significantly diminished because the administration has [gutted](#) the oversight offices at DHS and is [defying](#) some efforts at Congressional oversight.

The rush to spend a 300% budget increase will also strain ICE's ability to hire quality staff (roughly 10,000 deportation officers). According to a 2017 [Inspector General report](#), to hire 10,000 officers, ICE would need 500,000 applicants, but the push to hire comes at a time when law enforcement agencies nationwide have had [difficulty](#) filling their ranks and unemployment rates are [low](#).

ICE already has special [hiring authority](#) that allows it to bypass the usual rigorous hiring procedures for federal employees, and deportation officers are not required to meet the same requirements as other federal law enforcement officers, such as having prior law enforcement experience. Pressure to hire quickly risks further lowering the bar or taking additional short cuts that are more likely to lead to hiring people whose work or criminal history should be disqualifying. Past efforts to accelerate the hiring of 5,000 CBP officers – half of the goal for new ICE hires – resulted in corruption rates, including for [bribery by trafficking and smuggling organizations](#), that [far exceeded](#) rates of corruption at other law enforcement agencies.

What should happen instead?

An enforcement-heavy posture – with detention largely outsourced to for-profit companies– will build a durable deportation infrastructure that is hard to reverse once funding, contracts, and staffing are locked in. Once an agency receives funding and begins hiring and entering contracts for firms to build facilities and ramp up the nation's immigrant detention apparatus, expectations for continued funding become entrenched, making it difficult to reverse the trend.

Instead of a deportation-only approach, funding should be balanced to screen for humanitarian claims like asylum; process more legal immigration applications; and hire enough judges to hold immigration court hearings. We are a nation of laws – including immigration laws – and a core American principle embedded in our Constitution is that everyone is entitled to due process to make sure that the law is being applied faithfully and accurately. Funding choices should reflect that principle.

FEATURED IMAGE: US President President Donald Trump tours a migrant detention center, dubbed "Alligator Alcatraz," located at the site of the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport in Ochopee, Florida on July 1, 2025. (Photo by ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS / AFP)

Statement of Ryan Schwank

For the Spotlight Forum
February 23, 2026

Submitted to

Senator Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations,
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs

Representative Robert Garcia
Ranking Member of the House Oversight and
Government Reform Committee

Senator Blumenthal, Representative Garcia, Committee Members:

My name is Ryan Schwank. I swore an oath to uphold the Constitution when I joined Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as an Assistant Chief Counsel. I followed that oath for four and a half years, working side by side with ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) officers; and I followed it when I resigned on February 13, 2026 (just over a week ago) so that I could speak to you today.

I am here as a concerned citizen and public servant; not as an opponent of the agency, nor as an advocate for those who violate our immigration laws. I believe in a strong and effective immigration system that

provides fair and transparent due process. I recognize the need for the United States to control its borders. I believe that a good immigration enforcement system requires dedicated and professional officers who know their legal duties and understand the limits of their authority and role. This is why I profoundly regret the need to be here today.

I am here today because I am duty bound to tell you the ICE Basic Immigration Enforcement Training Program is now deficient, defective, and broken.

While at ICE, I served as an Assistant Chief Counsel for the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) from August 1, 2021 until I resigned on February 13, 2026. Prior to ICE, I had worked in municipal law enforcement oversight. While at ICE, my duties included representing ICE in proceedings before the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR). I also served as an onsite legal advisor at the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas. In September 2025, I became an Instructor for the incoming "surge" of new ICE recruits at the ICE Academy at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center ("FLETC") in Glynnco, Georgia. As an ICE Academy instructor, I was responsible for teaching the legal curriculum to new ICE Agents being recruited as part of the "Surge".

I was given the unique opportunity and privilege of training ICE cadets at FLETC on the constitutional and statutory limits of their authority, and regulatory requirements to enforce immigration law. I volunteered to take on this assignment based on my experience in law enforcement oversight, including at the state and local level prior to my service at ICE.

On my first day on the job at FLETC, I received secretive orders to teach new cadets to violate the Constitution by entering homes without a judicial warrant. For the last five months, I watched ICE dismantle the training program; cutting 240 hours of vital classes from a 584-hour program - classes that teach the Constitution, our legal system, firearms training, the use of force, lawful arrests, proper detention, and the limits of officer authority. For example, they ceased legal instruction regarding use of force. This means cadets are not taught what it means to be objectively reasonable – the very standard which the law requires them to meet when deciding whether or not to use deadly force. Our jobs as instructors are to teach them so well that they can make split second decisions about what they can and cannot do, in life and death situations. Yet in the name of churning out an endless stream of officers, DHS leadership has dismantled the academic and practical tests that we need to know if cadets can safely

and lawfully perform their job. All to satisfy an administration demanding they train thousands of new officers before the end of the year.

DHS told the public that new cadets receive all of the training they need to perform their duties; that no critical material or standards have been cut. This is a lie. ICE made the program shorter, and they removed so many essential parts that what remains is a dangerous husk. No reasonable person would believe a training program suddenly cut nearly in half could meet the minimum legal requirements. These aren't abstract rules, they're codified in regulations such as 8 CFR 287(g)(i). Congress required immigration officers to meet these minimum standards for a reason. ICE officers cannot lawfully perform their duties, make arrests, carry weapons, and use force without passing appropriate training.

New cadets are graduating from the academy despite widespread concerns among training staff that even in the final days of training the cadets cannot demonstrate a solid grasp of the tactics or the law required to perform their jobs. Without reform, ICE will graduate thousands of new officers who do not know their constitutional duty, do not know the limits of their authority, and do not have the training to recognize an unlawful order. That should scare everyone.

DHS assures the public these cadets get on the job training to compensate for anything missing at the academy. This too is a lie. Many graduates go to their home office just long enough to get their gun, badge, and body armor before deploying to Minneapolis or other ICE operations with minimal supervision. It is shocking that anyone thinks this is safe or responsible.

And this pattern of lies is not isolated. It extends beyond the training program to include deceiving Congress and the public about the rules followed by ICE officers once they graduate. On my first day at the Academy, I was instructed to read and return a memo in my supervisor's presence which claimed ICE officers could enter homes without a judicial warrant. The Acting ICE Director authorized the very conduct that DHS in 2025 legal training materials has called "the chief evil against which the wording of the Fourth Amendment is directed" -- that is "physical entry of the home" without consent or a proper warrant. Never in my career had I ever received such a blatantly unlawful order - nor one conveyed in such a troubling manner. I was being shown this memo in secret by a supervisor who made sure that I understood that disobedience could cost me my job.

ICE is teaching cadets to violate the constitution, and they were attempting to cloak it in secrecy.

I am here today to convey the public danger that is being created at the ICE Academy. I know from my conversations with many faculty members that I am not alone in my fear. Law enforcement is a deadly serious business. It is not a place for hyperbole, exaggeration, or falsehoods. Deficient training can and will get people killed. It can and will lead to unlawful arrests, violations of constitutional rights, and a fundamental loss of public trust in law enforcement. ICE is lying to Congress and the American people about the steps it is taking to ensure its over 10,000 new officers faithfully uphold the Constitution and can perform their jobs.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today about the intentional dismantling of the ICE Basic Immigration Enforcement Training Program; about the secretive I-205 memo; and to help this committee untangle the deceptive practices of ICE when it comes to both.