

Dear Chair McEntee and members of House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of H7434, which would bar Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials from being within 200 feet of any polling place where voting is taking place.

As for some context as to why this bill is critical at this time: the US Constitution in Article 1 Section 4 clearly states that states shall determine the times, places, and manner of voting for federal elections. It is no secret that the Trump Administration has made several moves to attempt to usurp this role of states to conduct voting, while President Trump himself spreads conspiracy theories about the 2020 election and voting fraud (which is so rare as to be non-existent for practical purposes in this country).

ICE and other agencies of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are clearly outside of the control of anyone outside the executive branch and a threat to our constitutional rights. As evidenced by judicial rulings too numerous to mention individually, ICE and other DHS agencies have been routinely violating the constitutional rights of persons in multiple states to due process, including conducting searches and detentions without judicial warrants. This before we get to the murder of at least two US citizens (Renee Good and Alex Pretti), who clearly posed no threats and instead were exercising their First Amendment rights.

The threat that ICE poses extends to our right to vote. The Trump Administration's Department of Justice (DOJ) has demanded not only that the state of Minnesota turn over its voter rolls but also indicated that the violence caused by DHS agencies would stop if the state does so. Following this DOJ has demanded voter rolls from other states. In addition to this, US Homeland Security Secretary Noem has stated that her agency, which has no legal role in voting, will ensure that "we have the right people voting, electing the right leaders."

The fact pattern is clear. Under the Trump Administration and Secretary Noem, ICE and other DHS agencies have become a clear threat to our democracy. It is Rhode Island's duty under the constitution to uphold the integrity of our electoral process. And this is why I urge you to support and advance H7434.

While I strongly support this legislation, I would make one request that this bill be extended beyond ICE to include Customs and Border Protection (CBP), as this agency has also shown itself to be a threat to our rights and freedoms.

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