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Overhauling ICE

A second US citizen is dead at the hands of Donald Trump's ICE. For a second time, the Administration has been quick to vilify the victim and defend the officer. For a second time this month, Americans can see with their own eyes ICE killing with impunity.

This is a public safety crisis instigated by an American president. If Republicans are afraid to take the lead and stand up to Trump's abuse of power, Democrats will.

Trump's ICE has demonstrated itself to be reckless, dangerous, and lawless towards Americans and immigrants alike. Democrats must condemn these abuses and advocate for immediate reforms, while also remembering who is to blame first: this is Donald Trump and Kristi Noem's ICE. Most Americans want immigration laws enforced reasonably, responsibly, and humanely. But they do not want this.

To help Democrats to meet the gravity of this ever-evolving moment, this memo highlights: 1) the current public safety crisis, 2) key steps to immediately rein in its abuses, and 3) the major elements of what a humane interior enforcement strategy should look like. In short:

- This is a public safety crisis.
- ICE abuses must end.
- ICE and CBP should be immediately withdrawn from Minnesota and pause at-large operations in urban areas until they prove they can conduct them safely.
- Masks on federal law enforcement should be a rare exception, not the rule.
- Trump must rein in his out-of-control ICE everywhere, end the chaos, restore professionalism, and hold bad actors accountable.
- DHS Secretary Kristi Noem must be removed.
- The weaponization of ICE by Trump to settle political scores and vendettas must stop.
- ICE enforcement and deportations must be targeted at dangerous undocumented immigrants based on previous violent criminal activity.
- A top-to-bottom reform of Trump's ICE must commence at once.

ICE Has Caused a Public Safety Crisis

Trump's ICE is off the rails. What Americans have seen since Donald Trump took office for a second time a year ago is not "targeted" immigration enforcement to get the "worst of the worst." It is a national dragnet that is intentionally making our communities less safe.

Masked agents are roaming neighborhoods, refusing to identify themselves, and arresting people without explanation. They are smashing windows, dragging people from their cars, and detaining them without saying who they are or why they are doing it.

Local law enforcement is now regularly speaking out against ICE's endangerment of local communities, including Hennepin County, Minnesota, Sheriff DaWanna Witt, who said, "We demand more from our federal government, more professionalism, more accountability, more humanity. We demand lawful policing that respects human dignity."

The President and Republicans are floundering, scrambling to blame the recent chaos on so-called "sanctuary" policies that allow local law enforcement to make careful decisions about how and when they aid federal immigration enforcement. Overriding them would do nothing to restore order—it would simply be another example of Washington overreach into local law enforcement decisions on how best to maintain public safety.

What's worse, the danger posed by this force has only grown more severe. The recent deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti were carried out by experienced federal agents, not by the thousands of new ICE officers this Administration has rushed through recruitment and training in the last few months. With 12,000 of these new recruits now being pushed out into the field, the risk that even more unprepared officers will make deadly mistakes can't be dismissed. If seasoned agents are already lethal in Minneapolis, imagine how much more dangerous this blanket enforcement will become as these rookies hit the streets.

Talking Points on ICE Abuses

- Trump's ICE is off the rails. This is not targeted enforcement against serious threats—it is a nationwide dragnet that is intentionally making American communities less safe.
- We must immediately end the use of ICE as a political weapon and the abuse of federal law enforcement to settle Trump's political and personal vendettas.
- Masked federal agents operating without identification, explanation, or transparency are not restoring order—they are creating chaos.
- Local law enforcement is sounding the alarm—and Washington should listen. Sheriffs and police chiefs across the country are warning ICE's tactics are endangering their communities and undermining legitimate policing.
- Blaming sanctuary policies for this chaos is a joke. What's new isn't sanctuary policies; it's an Administration that has lost control and is now trying to scapegoat the people actually responsible for public safety.

- This Administration didn't inherit chaos—it created it, and now it's trying to undermine local authorities to avoid accountability.
- The danger is escalating—not receding. The killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti were carried out by experienced federal agents—not new, untrained recruits.
- Yet the Administration has rushed 12,000 newly hired officers through shortened training and lowered standards and is now deploying them into communities.
- If seasoned agents are already using deadly force, it is reckless to pretend that flooding neighborhoods with less-prepared officers will make anyone safer.
- People are being stopped, questioned, and taken away with no probable cause, no warrants, and—in too many cases—no explanation at all.
- Some victims are released hours later with bruises and trauma. Others disappear into detention with no explanation.
- Americans should not have to fear being stopped, grabbed, or harmed by their own government.
- This is what it looks like when a government stops respecting the rule of law.

Steps to Immediately Rein in ICE Abuses

Democrats must call this what it is: a crisis of the Administration's own making. That starts with calling for an immediate halt to dangerous operations and a restoration of basic law and order—steps Minnesota Democrats have already demanded. It also means refusing to write a blank check for ICE. Senate Democrats are right to oppose DHS funding that lacks real guardrails against abuse, and Senator Cortez Masto has put forward a smart alternative: redirecting the extraordinary funding windfall Republicans handed to ICE to instead fund local law enforcement.

Accountability must follow. The leadership of DHS, ICE, and CBP should be compelled to testify before Congress, as Democrats in both chambers are demanding. If Republicans refuse to exercise meaningful oversight, Democrats should do it themselves—through hearings and aggressive fact-finding, as the Minnesota delegation has already demonstrated. That includes demanding records and evidence related to serious abuses, as Representative Pressley recently did for all records related to the killing of Renee Good. And it also means pursuing impeachment where warranted, as many Democrats are now urging with respect to Secretary Noem.

Finally, Democrats, and all who truly value public safety in this country, should insist on independent scrutiny. ICE and CBP cannot be allowed to investigate themselves. Congress should demand the creation of an independent investigative body—or the appointment of a

special prosecutor—to examine cases of serious abuse. And until ICE can demonstrate that it can operate lawfully and safely, at-large enforcement in dense urban areas should be paused. Public safety must come first.

Talking Points on Reining in ICE Abuses

- This is a crisis of the Administration's own making—and it demands immediate action.
- Trump must rein in ICE and CBP, halt dangerous at-large operations, restore professionalism, and end enforcement tactics that are clearly spiraling out of control.
- We must refuse blank-check funding for DHS without real guardrails, accountability, and enforceable standards.
- Pouring billions into ICE without real guidance or oversight has weakened public safety and left communities more vulnerable, not more secure.
- No one is above oversight and accountability.
- Secretary Noem is incompetent and must go. Where misconduct rises to the level of abuse of power, impeachment is not radical—it is a constitutional responsibility.
- DHS is asserting powers that no democratic society should tolerate: warrantless home entries, detention of US citizens, denial of counsel, and routine violations of constitutional rights.
- ICE's refusal to cooperate with local law enforcement has heightened danger for communities and officers alike.

ICE Needs a Top-to-Bottom Overhaul

Beyond the immediate and urgent need to halt dangerous operations and restore order, this moment demands something deeper: serious reform of ICE and the broader immigration enforcement system. The last few months have stripped away any remaining illusions about the risks of granting an agency extraordinary autonomy while holding it to lower standards than the rest of American law enforcement. Immigration enforcement is necessary—but it must be safe, disciplined, and professional. Show Americans that accountability and professionalism are not optional in federal law enforcement.

ICE and CBP have long operated with a degree of independence that would be unacceptable anywhere else in American policing. That lack of guardrails—combined with vague mandates, shifting political directives, and weak oversight—has produced an enforcement culture untethered from public safety norms. The result is not precision or control, but

chaos: masked agents, unclear authority, dangerous tactics, and a growing conflict with the local police departments who are primarily responsible for keeping communities safe.

First, Democrats must set firm, non-negotiable standards for how immigration enforcement is conducted. If ICE and CBP are going to operate in American communities, they must do so visibly, lawfully, and with restraint. That means no masks, no anonymous operations, no intimidation tactics, and no enforcement that undercuts or conflicts with local police. Officers should clearly identify themselves, state their authority, and explain the reason for an interaction—just as any other law enforcement officer is required to do. Federal immigration authorities should also be held to the same liability standards as state and local law enforcement. These are not activist demands; they are policing fundamentals.

Democrats are already showing how this could be done. The Stop Excessive Force in Immigration Act, introduced by Representatives Peters, Goldman, and Krishnamoorthi, and Senators Kelly and Gallego, sets clear limits on dangerous tactics and weapons. It restricts the use of chokeholds and reinforces basic standards of transparency and accountability. The Bivens Act in the House and the Constitutional Accountability Act similarly bring the standards already placed upon state and local law enforcement to federal officers—making federal officers civilly liable for certain egregious abuses, consistent with standards applied to state and local law enforcement. These reforms would send an important signal: immigration enforcement is not exempt from the rules that govern every other law enforcement officer in our country.

Second, Democrats must insist that ICE and CBP meet modern law enforcement training and professionalism standards. No officer should be interacting with the public—much less using force—without rigorous, standardized federal law enforcement training. The current approach of rushing thousands of recruits through shortened training pipelines is reckless. It endangers civilians, officers, and the integrity and legitimacy of law enforcement itself.

Here again, Democratic leadership is pointing the way forward. Proposals to strengthen training requirements, limit who can conduct at-large interior operations, and ensure officers are properly prepared before deployment reflect a commitment to public safety—not ideology. And they must be heeded.

Third, Democrats must force real oversight and independent accountability. An agency with the power to detain, arrest, and use force cannot be allowed to police itself. Democrats should continue demanding independent oversight, regular audits, and meaningful consequences for abuses—up and down the chain of command. That means, among other things, restoring the oversight bodies that the Trump Administration shut down.

Fourth, Democrats must reset enforcement priorities around real public safety.

Immigration enforcement should focus on individuals who pose genuine safety threats, recent immigration violators, and those with final orders whose removal is imminent.

Dragnet tactics that sweep up families, long-time residents, and bystanders do not make communities safer—they erode trust and divert resources from real crime.

Senator Gallego and 29 other Senate Democrats have made this point powerfully by calling out the diversion of thousands of law enforcement officers away from violent crime, human trafficking, and child exploitation and into mass immigration enforcement. That diversion has consequences. Democrats should keep drawing that line clearly: every hour spent chasing indiscriminate deportation quotas is an hour not spent keeping Americans safe.

Fifth, Democrats must reject the use of wartime authorities in immigration enforcement.

Immigration enforcement does not justify the abuse of extraordinary wartime or foreign policy authorities like the *Alien Enemies Act* or the *Insurrection Act*. Democrats are, and should be, unequivocal in opposing the use of these tools against civilian communities and in routine law enforcement situations.

Finally, Democrats must lead with reform—not retreat—because the cost of inaction is already measured in lives. This is no longer an abstract policy debate; it is a public safety emergency unfolding in real time. Restoring order means reasserting control over an agency that has been allowed to operate without sufficient standards, oversight, or accountability. By advancing serious, enforceable reforms—rigorous training requirements, independent oversight, clear limits on force, and a public safety-first enforcement strategy—Democrats can demonstrate that the rule of law is strengthened, not weakened, when federal law enforcement is disciplined, professional, and answerable to the public it serves.

Talking Points on an ICE Overhaul

- America needs a new DHS Secretary who is competent, professional, and has a career in law enforcement. America deserves to be free of anyone leading the agency who is an incompetent, media hungry, political hack.
- No more masks. No more secrecy. No more intimidation. No more working against local police. Officers should immediately identify themselves, their agency, their badge number, and the reason for the interaction when speaking to the public.
- We need aggressive, independent oversight and regular audits. An agency with this much power cannot be allowed to police itself.
- Americans demand accountability for DHS, ICE, and CBP leaders, as well as ICE officers, many of whom have brazenly abused their power and authority.

- We must ensure rigorous training for ICE officers. No ICE officer should go anywhere near the public before having advanced federal law enforcement training.
- ICE priorities must be reset. Focus on serious public safety threats, recent immigration violators, and individuals with final orders whose removal is imminent.
- We must restrict the use of dangerous equipment and techniques, including tear gas, flash-bangs, pepper balls, and chokeholds.
- End immigration enforcement at sensitive locations, including schools, bus stops, hospitals, and churches.
- End the fiction that America is at war and prevent abuses of extraordinary war time and foreign policy authorities such as the *Alien Enemies Act* and the *Insurrection Act*.
- No one is arguing against immigration enforcement. But enforcement without professionalism, training, and accountability is not enforcement, it's chaos. When people are dying, the only responsible path forward is a full overhaul of ICE before the next tragedy can occur.
