

**Testimony of  
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***Sanctuary Policies: Victims' Perspectives***

**Before  
the Committee on the Judiciary  
Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and  
Enforcement  
United States House of Representatives**

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Chairman McClintock, Ranking Member Jayapal and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. It is an honor to appear before you with my fellow witnesses. And Ms. Gormon and Mr. Abraham, no one should suffer what you have suffered. I am deeply sorry for your losses, and I respect and honor your courage in being here today.

My name is Sarah Pierce, and I am the Director of Social Policy at Third Way, a national policy think tank where I lead our work on crime and immigration. At Third Way, we focus on practical solutions that make government work better for Americans, including a secure, orderly, and humane immigration system and a serious commitment to public safety.

Every jurisdiction in America—including those that describe themselves as sanctuaries—participates in immigration enforcement to some degree. No city, county, or state can prevent ICE from enforcing federal immigration law. The real dispute is narrower: whether local police and sheriffs should lend local time, jail space, personnel, and public credibility to federal civil immigration enforcement, by notifying ICE, holding people for ICE, or going further by joining programs like 287(g), which deputizes state and local officers to perform immigration enforcement functions.

That dispute is fundamentally about public safety. It is about what makes police more effective, what makes victims and witnesses more willing to report crime, and how limited law enforcement resources should be used. Unfortunately, this Administration is worsening the two problems at the center of the sanctuary debate: trust and resources. Local officials are being asked to trust federal immigration enforcement at the very moment ICE is using tactics many local officials cannot defend. And local agencies are being asked to spend scarce resources on ICE's efforts at the very moment the federal government is pulling resources away from work on gun smuggling, drug trafficking, child exploitation, and more, and leaving local agencies to try and fill the gap.

## What Sanctuary Policies Are—and What They Are Not

Sanctuary policies are often presented as a blockade against ICE. That is misleading. These policies do not block ICE from entering a jurisdiction, conducting arrests, or enforcing federal law. They limit when local officials will lend local resources to help ICE do its job.<sup>1</sup>

These choices are usually driven by four practical concerns: community trust; local control over police priorities; legal liability; and limited staffing, jail space, and resources.<sup>2</sup> These are the day-to-day realities of American policing.

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Pierce. "Sanctuary Isn't What You Think." Third Way, Sept. 9, 2025, updated Feb. 23, 2026, <https://www.thirdway.org/memo/sanctuary-isnt-what-you-think>.

<sup>2</sup> "Shared Principles of Agreement—Public Safety Leadership Convening." International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2026, <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/Law%20Enforcement%20Convening%20Principles.pdf>; Major Cities Chiefs. "Immigration Policy." 2024, <https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Revised-2017-Immigration-Policy.pdf>; "Balancing community trust and enforcement: The complex issue of immigration." Police Executive Research Forum, Apr. 12, 2025, <https://www.policeforum.org/trending12apr25>; International Association of Chiefs of Police, "Enforcing Immigration Law: The Role of State, Tribal, and Local Law Enforcement." Police Chief 19, no. 4, Apr. 2005, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/enforcing-immigration-law-role-state-tribal-and-local-law>; "Legal Advisory: Legal Guidance for Massachusetts Chiefs of Police." Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, May 5, 2025,

State and local law enforcement are not flush with personnel. Three-quarters of local police departments in the United States employ fewer than 25 sworn officers.<sup>3</sup> Even larger police forces are facing critical staffing shortages, putting significant strain on the officers who protect America's cities. These are agencies focused on core public safety responsibilities: responding to 911 calls, investigating shootings, handling domestic violence, clearing robberies, managing jail operations, and protecting their communities. Asking them to absorb additional federal duties risks pulling officers away from something else.

Meanwhile, ICE already has federal authority, federal agents, federal databases, and an unprecedented infusion of federal funding. ICE is not some underfunded agency begging local police for help. Congress has already provided ICE \$113.5 billion in supplemental funding through 2029—\$75 billion through OBBBA and another \$38.5 billion through the Secure America Act—on top of its regular annual budget.<sup>4</sup> That supplemental pot alone is larger than the annual military budgets of all but four countries in the world.<sup>5</sup> Congress has provided ICE with so much extra money that its reconciliation funding alone exceeds the combined annual operating budgets of every local police department in America.<sup>6</sup>

And despite that striking mismatch, even self-described sanctuaries provide information to ICE. When a person is booked by state or local law enforcement, fingerprints are run through federal systems, checked against DHS immigration databases, and flagged for ICE.<sup>7</sup> Thus ICE has both the means and resources to find people. But the pressure remains on local agencies to do everything ICE asks, even when those requests raise legal, operational, and public safety concerns.

So the question should not be, “Why won’t every jurisdiction do everything ICE asks?” The question should be, “What kind of cooperation actually improves public safety and supports local policing?”

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<https://westfordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/17269/Massachusetts-Chiefs-of-Police-Association---Legal-Advisory---Cooperation-with-Immigration-Officials>.

<sup>3</sup> Shelley S. Hyland and Elizabeth Davis. “Local Police Departments, 2016: Personnel.” Bureau of Justice Statistics, Oct. 2019, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/lpd16p.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Budget, Ranking Member. “As Senate Republicans Give ICE, CBP \$70 Billion, Agencies are Sitting on \$100 Billion from Previous Reconciliation Bill.” May 20, 2026, <https://www.budget.senate.gov/ranking-member/newsroom/press/senate-republicans-ice-cbp-70-billion-agencies-sitting-100-billion-previous-reconciliation-bill>; American Immigration Council. “What’s in the Secure America Act?” June 10, 2026, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/fact-sheet/whats-in-the-secure-america-act/>.

<sup>5</sup> Xiao Liang, Nan Tian, Diego Lopes da Silva, Lorenzo Scarazzato, Zubaida Karim, and Jade Guiberteau Ricard. “Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2025.” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Apr. 2026, [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/2604\\_milex\\_2025.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/2604_milex_2025.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Sean E. Goodison. “Local Police Departments Personnel, 2020.” Bureau of Justice Statistics, Nov. 2022, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/media/68016/download>.

<sup>7</sup> FBI. “Privacy Impact Assessment Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS)/Next Generation Identification (NGI) Biometric Interoperability.” Jan. 18, 2012, <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/more-fbi-services-and-information/freedom-of-information-privacy-act/department-of-justice-fbi-privacy-impact-assessments/iafis-ngi-biometric-interoperability>.

## This Administration is Making Cooperation Harder

Unfortunately, this Administration is making cooperation harder, not easier.

Local jurisdictions need to be able to trust their federal partners before they lend scarce time, personnel, jail space, and public credibility. That is especially true in immigration enforcement, where federal actions can and do directly affect how residents view local police.<sup>8</sup> If DHS wants local jurisdictions to notify ICE before release, provide jail access, honor transfer requests, or participate in 287(g), local officials need confidence that federal immigration enforcement is targeted, professional, lawful, and coordinated with local public safety needs.

This Administration has done the opposite.

First, it has treated skeptical jurisdictions as enemies to be punished rather than partners to be persuaded. The Administration has threatened funding, filed lawsuits, issued subpoenas, published public lists, and accused entire jurisdictions of protecting criminals.<sup>9</sup> The President's April 2025 executive order on sanctuary jurisdictions directed agencies to publish lists, identify federal funds for suspension or termination, and pursue legal remedies against jurisdictions deemed noncompliant.<sup>10</sup> That may satisfy a political audience, but it is a poor strategy for building law enforcement cooperation.

Even law enforcement organizations that favor strong immigration enforcement have warned against this approach. The National Sheriffs' Association criticized DHS's sanctuary list process for failing to provide transparency, input, or a meaningful way for jurisdictions to respond, and warned that the approach could create a "vacuum of trust" that may take years to repair.<sup>11</sup> The International Association of Chiefs of Police organized a group of leaders from nearly 20 law enforcement organizations, including the National League of Cities, the National District Attorneys Association, and the Small and Rural Law Enforcement Executives' Association, and put out a joint document highlighting how the Administration's rhetoric and approach to immigration has diverted resources, undermined trust, and made it harder for law enforcement to do their jobs.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Tom K. Wong et al., "How Interior Immigration Enforcement Affects Trust in Law Enforcement." *Perspectives on Politics* 19, no. 2 (2021): 357–370, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/abs/how-interior-immigration-enforcement-affects-trust-in-law-enforcement/1D3021F5802F2E0FCEF741BDAEAB47A0>; Rebecca Succar, Mohamed S. Jalal, Christopher M. Olivola, and Daniel B. Neill. "Understanding the role of media in the formation of public sentiment towards the police." *Communications Psychology* 2, Article 20 (2024), <https://engineering.nyu.edu/news/high-profile-incidents-police-brutality-sway-public-opinion-more-performance-peoples-local-law>.

<sup>9</sup> "Sanctuary Jurisdictions Defying Federal Immigration Law." Department of Homeland Security, archived May 30, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250530130245/https://www.dhs.gov/sanctuary-jurisdictions>; "U.S. Sanctuary Jurisdiction List Following Executive Order 14287: Protecting American Communities From Criminal Aliens." U.S. Department of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/ag/us-sanctuary-jurisdiction-list-following-executive-order-14287-protecting-american-communities>.

<sup>10</sup> "Protecting American Communities From Criminal Aliens." Executive Order 14287, The White House, Apr. 28, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/protecting-american-communities-from-criminal-aliens/>.

<sup>11</sup> National Sheriffs' Association. "NSA President Issues Statement Calling For DHS Accountability and Transparency." May 31, 2025, <https://www.sheriffs.org/nsa-president-issues-statement-calling-for-dhs-accountability-and-transparency/>.

<sup>12</sup> Jeff Winter. "Law enforcement leaders propose guidelines to restore trust amid immigration

Second, ICE's tactics are deepening the trust deficit.<sup>13</sup> Local officials are being asked to attach their police departments' credibility to a federal enforcement effort that many view as reckless, indiscriminate, poorly coordinated, and legally risky. As explained by former Houston and Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo, the public often does not distinguish "one badge from the other," especially when ICE agents wear "police" markings and use tactics that local police would not defend.<sup>14</sup> Residents often do not know who is ICE, who is local police, and who is simply wearing a badge—especially as ICE impersonation crimes are on the rise.<sup>15</sup> Secretive, chaotic, or abusive ICE operations erode public trust, and leave local police to repair the damage.

Federal immigration agents have fatally shot three US citizens since March 2025, including Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minnesota, whose deaths were captured on widely circulated videos.<sup>16</sup> Agents have detained hundreds of US citizens, smashed car windows, pointed guns at crowds, used excessive force, and used tear gas at close range and in residential areas.<sup>17</sup> Local law enforcement did not design those operations, but they must live with the consequences of public outcry, protest response, emergency calls, and damaged confidence in anyone wearing a law enforcement uniform.

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operations." Apr. 2, 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/04/02/us/immigration-enforcement-ice-operations>; Shared Principles of Agreement—Public Safety Leadership Convening." International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2026, [https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/Law%20Enforcement\\_Convening\\_Shared%20Principles.pdf](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/Law%20Enforcement_Convening_Shared%20Principles.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Pierce and Sudria Twyman. "How the Trump Administration is Making Policing More Difficult." May 11, 2026, <https://www.thirdway.org/memo/how-the-trump-administration-is-making-policing-more-difficult>.

<sup>14</sup> Laura Rice. "Ex-police chief Art Acevedo: ICE agents are poorly trained or supervised, acting unconstitutionally." Texas Standard, Feb. 3, 2026, <https://texasstandard.org/stories/police-chief-art-acevedo-ice-criticisim-minneapolis-op-ed/>.

<sup>15</sup> Sam Levin. "Police across the US worry officers are being misidentified as ICE, records show." The Guardian, Apr. 24, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/apr/24/ice-police-danger-us>.

<sup>16</sup> "NEWS: House Oversight Democrats Demand Investigation into Death of Ruben Ray Martinez." Office of Rep. Greg Casar, Mar. 24, 2026, <https://casar.house.gov/media/press-releases/news-house-oversight-democrats-demand-investigation-death-ruben-ray-martinez>; "Alex Pretti, Renee Good ICE Shootings Federal Investigations." NPR, Apr. 10, 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/04/10/nx-s1-5775847/alex-pretti-renee-good-ice-shootings-federal-investigations>.

<sup>17</sup> Nicole Foy. "We Found That More Than 170 U.S. Citizens Have Been Held by Immigration Agents. They've Been Kicked, Dragged and Detained for Days." ProPublica, Oct. 16, 2025, <https://www.propublica.org/article/immigration-dhs-american-citizens-arrested-detained-against-will>; "Video shows Ice agents smashing car window to detain asylum seeker." The Guardian, Apr. 17, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/17/ice-detention-massachusetts-man-video>; "We asked a former federal agent to review videos showing use of force against protesters. Here's what he found." CBS News, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/former-federal-agent-ice-use-of-force-against-protesters/>; "Tear gas, car crashes, chokeholds: Risky tactics have driven Trump's Chicago deportation 'blitz.'" WBEZ Chicago, Nov. 14, 2025, <https://www.wbez.org/immigration/2025/11/14/ice-bovino-border-patrol-homeland-security-chicago-police-department>; "They Kidnapped Me": L.A. Immigrant Rights Activist Recounts Violent Arrest by Masked Federal Agents." Democracy Now!, Aug. 19, 2025, [https://www.democracynow.org/2025/8/19/union\\_del\\_barrio](https://www.democracynow.org/2025/8/19/union_del_barrio); "Pastor Shot in the Head by ICE Sues Trump Over First Amendment." The New Republic, <https://newrepublic.com/post/201531/pastor-shot-head-ice-sues-trump-first-amendment>; "Criminal investigation launched after feds fire pepper ball at CBS Chicago reporter's truck." CBS Chicago, [https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/feds-fire-pepper-ball-at-cbs-chicago-reporters-truck/?mc\\_cid=8dc507ce67&mc\\_eid=9c4a02011b](https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/feds-fire-pepper-ball-at-cbs-chicago-reporters-truck/?mc_cid=8dc507ce67&mc_eid=9c4a02011b).

Third, ICE is asking local officers for coordination when it is all too often failing to provide it in return. ICE does not need local permission to enforce federal law. But public safety is better served when federal operations are coordinated with local law enforcement whenever operationally safe and appropriate. Local police are the ones responsible for emergency response, traffic control, protest response, crowd management, and public order issues that arise from federal operations in their communities. When ICE or CBP conduct large, visible, or aggressive operations without meaningful coordination with local officials, local police are left responding to confused 911 calls, reports of suspicious armed individuals, protests, traffic disruptions, and potential confrontations without adequate situational awareness.<sup>18</sup>

Charlotte provides a recent example. During a Border Patrol operation there, the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office said federal officials had told them the operation was over, while DHS publicly contradicted that statement and said the operation was continuing.<sup>19</sup> During that same operation, news outlets reported videos of masked agents smashing a pickup window and dragging a man out.<sup>20</sup> Public-facing federal operations like this one force local law enforcement to manage the aftermath.

This creates a vicious cycle. ICE conducts operations that local officials and residents view as excessive, poorly coordinated, or damaging to public trust and perceptions of law enforcement as a whole. Local officials respond by strengthening sanctuary policies or refusing deeper cooperation. The Administration then treats those policies as proof of hostility to immigration enforcement, and lashes out against localities on the public stage. That cycle does not make Americans safer. It makes cooperation less likely.

The point is not to stop all federal immigration enforcement. It is that federal immigration enforcement should be targeted, professional, lawful, and coordinated in ways that local law enforcement can defend. You cannot build law enforcement partnerships by treating local law enforcement as the enemy. And you cannot ask local police to lend ICE their hard-earned credibility while ICE uses questionable tactics that local police are then forced to explain, manage, and clean up.

## **The Federal Prioritization of Immigration Has Created More Burden for State and Local Partners**

The Administration's immigration-first approach is not only damaging trust. It is pushing more public safety burden back onto state and local systems.

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Stanton, "Police Chief Issues 'Kidnapping' Warning Ahead of Possible ICE Raids." Newsweek, Dec. 3, 2025, <https://www.newsweek.com/police-chief-issues-kidnapping-warning-ahead-of-possible-ice-raids-11151526>; Alex Stone, "Los Angeles police responded to a kidnapping call. But instead found an ICE operation." ABC News, June 25, 2025, <https://abcnews.com/US/los-angeles-police-responded-kidnapping-call-found-ice/story?id=123204661>; Jeremy Harris, "Seattle leaders respond to ICE arrests that prompted 911 calls at cemetery." KOMO News, Jan. 8, 2026, <https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-police-chief-shon-barnes-mayor-katie-wilson-leaders-respond-to-ice-arrests-that-prompted-911-calls-at-cemetery-evergreen-washelli-cemetery-ice-shooting-ice-arrest>.

<sup>19</sup> "Status of immigration crackdown operation in Charlotte in doubt." Reuters, Nov. 20, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/immigration-crackdown-operation-charlotte-ends-sheriff-says-2025-11-20/>.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

Cases that might once have been strengthened by federal prosecution are staying with local police and local prosecutors. In Maryland, federal gun prosecutions fell 32% in 2025, to the lowest level in at least 25 years, even as Baltimore police more than quadrupled local felon-in-possession arrests.<sup>21</sup> In San Francisco, federal drug-dealing prosecutions fell by more than half in 2025 after federal agents who had worked with local police on drug busts were redirected toward immigration enforcement.<sup>22</sup> Across Northern California, federal criminal charges dropped by 40% in 2025 through November 1, compared with the same period in 2024.<sup>23</sup> Drug charges fell by about half, gun charges fell by 40%, and drug conspiracy charges fell from 89 to 32.<sup>24</sup> Local and state officials then had to try to fill the gap, including through additional San Francisco police arrests and expanded deployments of California Highway Patrol to work on crime.

In Minnesota, after the Administration flooded the state with federal agents, only 8 people were charged federally with gun and drug charges between January and April 2026, compared to 77 people during the same period the year before.<sup>25</sup> Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty said that federal agents had started bringing complex cases to her office, asking locals to take them on because the federal agents were too consumed by immigration work.<sup>26</sup>

This pattern is national. Federal prosecutions for drug conspiracy, money-laundering, and drug prosecutions have all decreased under this Administration—with federal drug prosecutions at their lowest level in decades.<sup>27</sup> Relatedly, referrals from ATF, DEA, and the US Marshals have all fallen under this Administration—meaning the federal government is doing less on guns, drugs, and fugitive apprehensions.<sup>28</sup> With the federal government failing to detect and disrupt these crimes, that burden goes to state and local law enforcement.

Meanwhile, the federal government has prioritized immigration enforcement above all else. In just May 2025, CBP and ICE referred seven times more cases to federal prosecutors than ATF, 7.3 times more than DEA, and 3.3 times more than FBI.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Brad Heath. “How immigration swallowed up federal gun crime efforts.” Reuters, Dec. 22, 2025, updated Dec. 23, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/how-immigration-swallowed-up-federal-gun-crime-efforts-2025-12-22/>.

<sup>22</sup> Megan Cassidy. “S.F. federal drug cases plummeted under Trump administration, data shows.” San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 12, 2025, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/crime/article/federal-drug-dealer-prosecution-21129613.php>.

<sup>23</sup> Brad Heath. “Trump promised a San Francisco crime crackdown. His administration did the opposite.” Reuters, Dec. 2, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-promised-san-francisco-crime-crackdown-his-administration-did-opposite-2025-12-02/>.

<sup>24</sup> Brad Heath. “Trump promised a San Francisco crime crackdown. His administration did the opposite.” Reuters, Dec. 2, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-promised-san-francisco-crime-crackdown-his-administration-did-opposite-2025-12-02/>.

<sup>25</sup> Brad Heath, Andrew Goudsward, and Kristina Cooke. “Trump vowed to fight crime in Minneapolis. Prosecutions plunged.” Reuters, May 7, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/how-trumps-minneapolis-immigration-blitz-hobbled-federal-crime-fighting-2026-05-07/>.

<sup>26</sup> Brad Heath, Andrew Goudsward, and Kristina Cooke. “Trump vowed to fight crime in Minneapolis. Prosecutions plunged.” Reuters, May 7, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/how-trumps-minneapolis-immigration-blitz-hobbled-federal-crime-fighting-2026-05-07/>.

<sup>27</sup> Brad Heath. “Federal drug prosecutions fall to lowest level in decades as Trump shifts focus to deportations.” Reuters, Sept. 29, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/federal-drug-prosecutions-fall-lowest-level-decades-trump-shifts-focus-2025-09-29>.

<sup>28</sup> “June 2025 Sees Declines in Federal Criminal Referrals by ATF Agents and DEA Agents.” Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, <https://tracreports.org/reports/764/>.

<sup>29</sup> “Referrals for Criminal Prosecution of Immigration Violations.” Transactional Records Access

This is the public safety problem Congress should be examining. The Administration is demanding that local police help ICE do its job while making it harder for federal law enforcement to help local police do theirs. Local departments need federal partners on gun trafficking, fentanyl networks, child exploitation, money laundering, violent crime, and transnational criminal organizations. Instead, federal capacity is being consumed by immigration enforcement, and state and local agencies are being asked to pick up the slack.

## This Administration is Making Americans Less Safe and Life Harder for Victims

I share the majority's concern for public safety. But after eight sanctuary hearings, Congress should also examine the Administration's own decisions that are weakening local law enforcement, destabilizing victim services, and letting serious criminal work fall through the cracks.

### Trump's Covert Cuts to Law Enforcement

Under President Trump, the Department of Justice has withheld, delayed, canceled, and redirected public safety dollars that Congress approved.<sup>30</sup> The Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) is one of the federal government's central pipelines for state and local public safety funding, awarding an average of \$3.9 billion a year over the past decade. Agencies rely on these grants to hire officers, buy body cameras, support prosecutors, serve crime victims, and fund anti-violence programs. But roughly half of last year's funds from OJP still have not reached the police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, victim service providers, and violence prevention programs waiting for them.

These dollars are vital for public safety in American communities. Decades of research show these investments significantly reduce violent crime.<sup>31</sup>

But since Trump took office, that support has slowed dramatically and, in some cases, been reversed.

In fiscal year 2025, Congress provided OJP with more than \$4.5 billion for policing, justice systems, violence prevention, and victim services.<sup>32</sup> Under a normal timeline, most of that money would have been awarded by September 30, 2025, the end of the fiscal year. Instead, nearly nine months later, only half—just \$2.26 billion—has gone out the door.<sup>33</sup> Instead of delivering money that Congress appropriated, OJP is leaving communities waiting.

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Clearinghouse, <https://tracreports.org/reports/763/>.

<sup>30</sup> Sarah Pierce. "Trump's Covert Cuts to Law Enforcement." Third Way, May 11, 2026, <https://www.thirdway.org/memo/trumps-covert-cuts-to-law-enforcement>.

<sup>31</sup> Evans, William N., and Emily G. Owens. "COPS and Crime." *Criminology & Public Policy* 6, no. 3 (2007): 481–517, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2008.00512.x>.

<sup>32</sup> "FY 2027 DOJ Grants Table (Including FY 2025 Enacted and FY 2026 Enacted)." U.S. Department of Justice, accessed June 29, 2026, <https://www.justice.gov/jmd/media/1434906/dl?inline>.

<sup>33</sup> "OJP Awards Since FY2021 By NOFO As Of 6/28/2026." U.S. Department of Justice, accessed June 29, 2026. <https://charts.ojp.usdoj.gov/t/public/views/OJPAwardsDashboardallFiscalYears/AwardsByNOFO?%3Aembed=y&%3Aiid=2&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>.

## Ungranted FY 2025 Office of Justice Programs Formula Funds

State	JAG Formula	Title II Formula	Byrne SCIP	Total
Alabama	\$ 5,322,039	\$ 766,035	\$ 2,265,488	\$ 8,353,562
Alaska	1,555,984	486,525	733,643	2,776,152
American Samoa	484,329	99,842	219,844	804,015
Arizona	6,998,394	947,813	3,101,076	11,047,283
Arkansas	3,608,308	653,328	1,657,242	5,918,878
California	32,506,609	4,204,755	14,672,295	51,383,659
Colorado	5,446,091	657,314	2,349,312	8,452,717
Connecticut	2,665,209	731,260	1,241,726	4,638,195
Delaware	1,609,643	485,413	686,751	2,781,807
District of Columbia	1,584,318	611,677	761,489	2,957,484
Florida	18,535,250	2,308,518	7,792,412	28,636,180
Georgia	8,494,582	1,416,039	3,862,826	13,773,447
Guam	724,005	103,256	328,126	1,155,387
Hawaii	1,631,713	627,595	732,077	2,991,385
Idaho	1,853,891	630,261	848,671	3,332,823
Illinois	10,580,845	1,299,251	4,792,068	16,672,164
Indiana	5,655,571	967,651	2,583,449	9,206,671
Iowa	2,803,757	667,142	1,268,394	4,739,293
Kansas	3,220,879	664,280	1,372,680	5,257,839
Kentucky	3,400,078	711,582	1,552,896	5,664,556
Louisiana	5,314,848	467,205	2,300,349	8,082,402
Maine	1,374,778	622,975	630,374	2,628,127
Maryland	6,013,635	726,537	2,555,689	9,295,861
Massachusetts	5,506,142	450,522	2,506,105	8,462,769
Michigan	9,349,531	1,186,498	4,043,567	14,579,596
Minnesota	4,142,227	837,045	1,909,759	6,889,031
Mississippi	2,716,009	662,918	1,184,176	4,563,103
Missouri	6,405,908	884,403	2,776,276	10,066,587
Montana	1,590,473	621,419	720,351	2,932,243
Nebraska	2,059,977	385,667	927,332	3,372,976
Nevada	3,641,830	653,877	1,555,255	5,850,962
New Hampshire	1,416,424	613,338	661,493	2,691,255
New Jersey	5,997,898	1,156,410	2,697,661	9,851,969
New Mexico	3,203,935	643,204	1,445,022	5,292,161

<b>New York</b>	15,115,940	1,772,916	6,724,205	<b>23,613,061</b>
<b>North Carolina</b>	8,606,004	1,336,601	3,949,757	<b>13,892,362</b>
<b>North Dakota</b>	726,801	616,839	328,125	<b>1,671,765</b>
<b>Northern Mariana Islands</b>	238,550	99,190	108,282	<b>446,022</b>
<b>Ohio</b>	9,093,654	1,458,573	3,871,959	<b>14,424,186</b>
<b>Oklahoma</b>	4,261,940	689,098	1,814,798	<b>6,765,836</b>
<b>Oregon</b>	3,443,494	667,119	1,588,284	<b>5,698,897</b>
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	9,747,434	1,389,911	4,409,454	<b>15,546,799</b>
<b>Puerto Rico</b>	2,146,361	639,938	1,111,318	<b>3,897,617</b>
<b>Rhode Island</b>	1,368,907	618,883	618,325	<b>2,606,115</b>
<b>South Carolina</b>	5,605,302	587,426	2,410,960	<b>8,603,688</b>
<b>South Dakota</b>	1,498,632	620,198	653,159	<b>2,771,989</b>
<b>Tennessee</b>	8,133,902	974,370	3,454,070	<b>12,562,342</b>
<b>Texas</b>	24,773,964	1,045,806	10,973,066	<b>36,792,836</b>
<b>Utah</b>	2,753,002	674,378	1,253,810	<b>4,681,190</b>
<b>Vermont</b>	709,849	488,929	328,125	<b>1,526,903</b>
<b>Virgin Islands</b>	722,881	80,021	328,126	<b>1,131,028</b>
<b>Virginia</b>	6,074,128	677,555	2,584,861	<b>9,336,544</b>
<b>Washington</b>	5,907,313	998,528	2,672,994	<b>9,578,835</b>
<b>West Virginia</b>	1,887,991	624,207	885,494	<b>3,397,692</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	4,621,010	811,488	2,117,254	<b>7,549,752</b>
<b>Wyoming</b>	754,694	600,000	328,125	<b>1,682,819</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 295,606,863</b>	<b>\$ 46,423,529</b>	<b>\$ 31,250,425</b>	<b>\$ 473,280,817</b>

Source: Byrne JAG, <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/jag-state-local-allocations.pdf>. Accessed June 26, 2026.  
 Title II Source, <https://ojdp.ojp.gov/funding/fy2025/titlell/fy25-award-amounts.pdf>. Accessed June 26, 2026.  
 Title II Non-Participating, <https://www.ojp.gov/funding/docs/OJJDP-2025-172545.pdf>. Accessed June 26, 2026.  
 Byrne SCIP Source: <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/fy-2025-byrne-scip-allocations.pdf>. Accessed June 26, 2026.

That means police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and victim service providers across the country are still waiting on funding that should already be at work in their communities. The direct consequences include stalled investigations, delayed hiring, disrupted planning, and fewer tools for agencies already stretched thin.

And the Administration’s failures do not stop at delays. In April 2025, DOJ terminated more than \$820 million in public safety grants, including funding tied to police training and officer wellness.<sup>34</sup> The majority of that terminated grant money—\$500 million—had been awarded but not yet distributed. The National Association of Counties warned that many of the canceled

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<sup>34</sup> Amy Solomon and Betsy Pearl. “DOJ Funding Update: A Deeper Look at the Cuts.” Council on Criminal Justice, May 2025, <https://counciloncj.org/doj-funding-update-a-deeper-look-at-the-cuts/>; “Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative.” Rural VCRI, <https://ruralvcri.org/>; “VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Initiative.” Bureau of Justice Assistance, <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/valor/overview>.

grants were already midstream, forcing recipients to stop work after programs had been built, staff hired, and communities had come to rely on the services.<sup>35</sup>

The cuts hit the Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative, the VALOR Initiative to improve officer safety and wellness, and the State and Local Anti-Terrorism Training (SLATT) program, which, since 1996, has trained more than 427,000 law enforcement officers to respond to domestic and international terrorism, targeted violence, and hate crimes.<sup>36</sup>

DOJ also cut programs that many police leaders say help them do their jobs more effectively, including community violence intervention efforts that prevent shootings and retaliation before officers have to respond to another crime scene.<sup>37</sup> It cut more than half of all federal gun violence prevention funding.<sup>38</sup> In response, 18 law enforcement groups and police chiefs urged then-Attorney General Pam Bondi to restore the grants, calling them “lifesaving, law-enforcement-enhancing strategies that work.”<sup>39</sup>

Hundreds of DOJ grantees have appealed these cancellations, but those appeals are languishing.<sup>40</sup> As of December 2025, more than 170 appeals from the grants canceled in April were still pending. In the meantime, programs have laid off staff or shut down altogether.

For the grants that are going out the door, DOJ has imposed sweeping new conditions that are not tailored to crime reduction or justice system performance.<sup>41</sup> Instead, the conditions drag public safety funding into the White House’s ideological battles over gender, vaccines, diversity initiatives, immigration, and other unrelated political priorities.

## Conditions Placed on DOJ Grants

DOJ Funding Streams	Specific Conditions
<b>Immigration</b>	

<sup>35</sup> “DOJ terminates justice and public safety-focused grants.” National Association of Counties, <https://www.naco.org/news/doj-terminates-justice-and-public-safety-focused-grants>.

<sup>36</sup> Amy Solomon and Betsy Pearl. “DOJ Funding Update: A Deeper Look at the Cuts.” Council on Criminal Justice, May 2025, <https://counciloncj.org/doj-funding-update-a-deeper-look-at-the-cuts/>; “Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative.” Rural VCRI, <https://ruralvcri.org/>; “VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Initiative.” Bureau of Justice Assistance, <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/valor/overview>; “State and Local Anti-Terrorism Training Program.” Bureau of Justice Assistance, archived Jan. 17, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250117221908/https://bja.ojp.gov/program/state-and-local-anti-terrorism-training-program/overview>; “DOJ cancels \$500M in public safety grants, cuts officer safety and crime prevention programs.” Police1, <https://www.police1.com/police-grant-center/doj-cancels-500m-in-public-safety-grants-cuts-officer-safety-and-crime-prevention-programs>.

<sup>37</sup> Amy Solomon and Betsy Pearl. “DOJ Funding Update: A Deeper Look at the Cuts.” Council on Criminal Justice, May 2025, <https://counciloncj.org/doj-funding-update-a-deeper-look-at-the-cuts/>.

<sup>38</sup> “Trump administration slashed federal funding for gun violence prevention.” Reuters, July 29, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/trump-administration-slashed-federal-funding-gun-violence-prevention-2025-07-29/>.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> “US Justice Department slow to respond to appeals after April wave of grant cuts.” Reuters, Dec. 19, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/us-justice-department-slow-respond-appeals-after-april-wave-grant-cuts-2025-12-19/>.

<sup>41</sup> Marla Guerra and Sarah Pierce. “DOJ’s Ideological Hijacking of Public Safety Grants.” Third Way, <https://www.thirdway.org/memo/dojs-ideological-hijacking-of-public-safety-grants>.

COPS	→ State and local law enforcement must comply with <u>8 USC 1373</u> and prohibit policies that limit communication with DHS
OJP	→ Some grantees must certify compliance with <u>8 USC 1373</u> → Funding may not be used to <u>impede federal immigration enforcement</u> , including by failing to provide information on citizenship or immigration status with DHS, honor DHS requests, or provide requested notice to DHS → Funding must not be used for <u>legal services</u> to any noncitizens, with few exceptions for protection orders for crime victims
OVW	→ Some grantees may be required to certify compliance with <u>federal immigration laws</u> → Programs cannot promote <u>any violations</u> of federal immigration law → Programs cannot <u>discourage collaboration</u> between law enforcement and immigration enforcement in addressing violence against women → Programs <u>cannot prioritize undocumented immigrants over citizens or legal residents</u> in receiving victim services and support
<b>Diversity, Equity, &amp; Inclusion</b>	
COPS	→ Programs must not have components relating to <u>diversity, equity, and inclusion</u> that “violate federal civil rights or nondiscrimination laws” → Funding may not be used to <u>advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, or environmental justice</u>
OJP	→ Programs must not have components relating to <u>diversity, equity, and inclusion</u> that “violate federal civil rights or nondiscrimination laws”
OVW	→ Grants must not promote “ <u>discriminatory programs or ideology, including illegal DEL</u> ” or diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs that do not align with the policy of equal dignity and respect as outlined in <u>EO 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity</u>
<b>Gender</b>	
COPS	→ Funding may not be used to promote “ <u>gender ideology</u> ”
OVW	→ Funding may not be used for “ <u>inculcating or promoting gender ideology</u> ” defined by <u>EO 14168, Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government</u> → Funding must not be used for “ <u>activities that frame domestic violence or sexual assault as systemic social justice issues rather than criminal offenses (e.g., prioritizing criminal justice reform or social justice theories over victim safety and offender accountability).</u> ”
<b>Vaccines</b>	
COPS	→ Funding cannot <u>directly or indirectly support any educational institution</u> that requires a COVID-19 vaccine for in-person instruction
<b>Public Monuments</b>	
COPS	→ Funding cannot support state or local governments and law enforcement agencies that have <u>failed to protect public monuments, memorials, and statutes from destruction or vandalism</u>

## Other Presidential Executive Orders

COPS	→ Programs must certify compliance with <u>“all applicable federal laws and Presidential Memoranda and all Executive Orders by the President”</u>
OVW	→ Applicants must certify that funding will not be used for <u>“any activity or program that unlawfully violates an Executive Order”</u>

**Note:** The affected DOJ grantmaking streams include the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), and the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW).

Source: Department of Justice, [Sanctuary Jurisdiction Directives](#); White House, [Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government](#); White House, [Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity](#); White House, [Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking](#).

The immediate danger is that these conditions will deter qualified applicants from seeking federal support at all. Some states, cities, agencies, and nonprofit partners have decided that the legal uncertainty, confusion around the conditions, ideological strings, and compliance burden are simply too great. Even jurisdictions that cooperate with federal immigration authorities may be hesitant to certify compliance with some of the more subjective and ill-defined grant conditions, such as the ban on “promoting gender ideology” or the requirement to comply with executive orders that have not yet been issued. Others have concluded that accepting the money is not worth the risk of later losing it or being dragged into litigation.

Jurisdictions that do apply may feel pressure to tailor their work toward the Administration’s preferred ideological priorities rather than their communities’ actual safety needs. That means grant dollars are less likely to flow to the best violence-prevention strategy, the most effective victim-service provider, or the strongest community-policing proposal. Instead, they are more likely to reward political conformity.

Taken together, these conditions represent a major shift in how the federal government supports public safety in American communities. Instead of directing DOJ grants toward proven public safety solutions, the Administration is using public safety dollars to reward political alignment and punish independence.

## The Immigration Focus Is Weakening Core Crime-Fighting Missions

The Administration’s immigration crackdown is pulling federal law enforcement away from the core missions that keep Americans safe. Agents and specialized personnel from across the federal government—including the FBI, ATF, DEA, US Marshals Service, HSI, CISA, and other agencies—have been redirected to support civil immigration operations, even when their ordinary work involves violent crime, child exploitation, human trafficking, firearms trafficking, cyber threats, terrorism, narcotics, and transnational criminal networks.<sup>42</sup>

Complex cases depend on agents with specialized training, long-running intelligence, digital evidence, confidential sources, and coordination with state, local, tribal, and international partners. When those agents are reassigned, cases slow down, leads go cold, evidence becomes harder to use, and dangerous actors get more time to operate.

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<sup>42</sup> David J. Bier. “ICE Has Diverted Over 25,000 Officers from Their Jobs.” Cato Institute, Sept. 3, 2025, <https://www.cato.org/blog/ice-has-diverted-over-25000-officers-their-jobs>; “DHS Agents Reassigned.” The New York Times, Nov. 16, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/16/us/politics/dhs-agents-reassigned.html>.

The effects are especially devastating at Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)—an agency the United States relies on to protect national security and combat human trafficking, child exploitation, money laundering, narcotics smuggling, firearms trafficking, and violent transnational gangs. HSI's work protecting and rescuing children from exploitation, abuse, and trafficking is highly specialized and relies on experienced agents, forensic interviewers, digital-evidence teams, and long-term partnerships that cannot be recreated overnight. Pulling those teams into immigration operations means the country is taking scarce expertise away from some of the most sensitive and urgent public safety work in government.

This is happening at a particularly dangerous moment. Artificial intelligence is accelerating the production and spread of child sexual abuse material, while technology companies report that federal follow-up on child exploitation referrals has dropped sharply over the course of this Administration.<sup>43</sup> Reports that some HSI personnel have tried to keep these cases alive by working them during their nights and weekends only underscore the point: career law enforcement officials understand that the mission they were trained to perform is being sidelined.<sup>44</sup>

The problem is broader than HSI. Nearly a quarter of FBI agents have been assigned to immigration enforcement, while ATF has reportedly shifted roughly 80% of its special agents to immigration-related work—undermining gun trafficking investigations and the agency's ability to investigate corrupt firearms dealers.<sup>45</sup> Cybersecurity personnel have also been pulled into deportation operations at a time when hospitals, water systems, energy grids, pipelines, and election infrastructure face growing threats from foreign adversaries.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> "AI Mental Health Crisis Law Enforcement." Bloomberg, 2026, <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2026-ai-mental-health-crisis-law-enforcement/>; "DHS Agents Reassigned." The New York Times, Nov. 16, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/16/us/politics/dhs-agents-reassigned.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Josh Meyer. "Thousands of DHS agents shift to deportation instead of drugs, weapons, and human trafficking." USA Today, Feb. 14, 2025, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/02/14/dhs-agents-deportation-nottrafficking/78641666007/>; Brad Heath, Joshua Schneyer, et al. "Exclusive: Thousands of agents diverted to Trump immigration crackdown." Reuters, Mar. 22, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/thousands-agents-diverted-trumpimmigration-crackdown-2025-03-22/>; Nick Miroff. "Trump Loves ICE. Its Workforce Has Never Been So Miserable." The Atlantic, July 10, 2025, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/07/trump-ice-moraleimmigration/683477>.

<sup>45</sup> "FBI has reassigned nearly one-quarter of agents to immigration." The Washington Post, Oct. 8, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/10/08/fbi-agents-reassigned-immigration/>; "Trump immigration push diverted ATF from gun cases." CNN, Oct. 15, 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/10/15/us/trump-immigration-atf-gun-cases-invs>; "How Trump Reversed Biden's Crackdown on Guns." ProPublica, <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-trump-reversed-biden-gun-crackdown-atf>.

<sup>46</sup> "DHS Cybersecurity Staff Reassigned to Trump's Deportation Push." Bloomberg, Oct. 8, 2025, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-10-08/homeland-security-cyber-personnel-reassigned-to-jobs-in-trump-s-deportation-push>; "CISA Directs Federal Agencies to Mitigate Vulnerabilities in F5 Devices." Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Oct. 15, 2025, <https://www.cisa.gov/news-events/alerts/2025/10/15/cisa-directs-federal-agencies-mitigate-vulnerabilities-f5-devices>.

A federal team in El Paso that had pursued child traffickers was disbanded as federal agents were redirected toward immigration enforcement.<sup>47</sup> Highway checkpoints near the southwest border that have long been identified as major drug-trafficking routes have gone unstaffed.<sup>48</sup>

The Administration calls this a public safety strategy, but its resource choices tell a different story. It is not prioritizing safety by pulling child exploitation investigators, firearms agents, cyber specialists, and national security personnel away from their missions. It is weakening the very institutions Americans rely on to stop predators, traffickers, violent criminals, cartels, and hostile foreign actors. Immigration enforcement should not come at the expense of the core crime-fighting work that protects families and communities.

## **This Administration is Undermining Victims and Letting Criminals Walk Free**

The Administration's approach to public safety is also weakening the systems that help victims recover and hold criminals accountable.

The President's corrupt use of pardons has directly reduced resources owed to crime victims. The Crime Victims Fund is not funded by taxpayers. It is supported by fines, penalties, and forfeitures paid by people and corporations convicted of federal crimes.<sup>49</sup> Those dollars help pay for victim compensation, domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, legal assistance, counseling, and other services that victims rely on after the worst moments of their lives. By pardoning convicted federal criminals and wiping away at least \$113 million in fines and penalties owed to the Fund, the President did not only erase accountability for offenders.<sup>50</sup> He denied victims money that was meant to support their recovery.

At the same time, the Administration has allowed thousands of federal criminal cases to collapse. In the first six months of the Trump Administration, the Department of Justice closed more than 23,000 pending criminal cases without prosecution, including cases involving elder abuse, fentanyl and other deadly drugs, money laundering, domestic terrorism, federal procurement fraud, health care fraud, labor racketeering, and human trafficking.<sup>51</sup>

Those choices deny victims their day in court, reduce future deposits into the Crime Victims Fund, and send a dangerous message that serious criminal conduct may go unanswered. During that same period, DOJ prosecuted roughly 32,000 immigration cases, making clear that the Administration is prioritizing immigration over core criminal enforcement.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "Trump's Immigration Push Diverts U.S. Agents From Drug, Money and Sex Crime Cases." The Wall Street Journal, [https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/trumps-immigration-push-diverts-u-s-agents-from-drug-money-and-sex-crime-cases-90b37cc9?st=QV2ntL&reflink=desktopwebshare\\_permalink](https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/trumps-immigration-push-diverts-u-s-agents-from-drug-money-and-sex-crime-cases-90b37cc9?st=QV2ntL&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink).

<sup>48</sup> *Id.*

<sup>49</sup> "Crime Victims Fund." Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, <https://ovc.ojp.gov/about/crime-victims-fund>.

<sup>50</sup> "Trump Pardons Are Draining Money From a Fund for Crime Victims." The Trace, Apr. 2026, <https://www.thetrace.org/2026/04/trump-pardons-crime-victims-fund-voca/>.

<sup>51</sup> "Trump's DOJ Is Letting Criminal Investigations Withers While Prioritizing Immigration Cases." ProPublica, <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-doj-immigration-bondi-declinations-criminal-investigations>.

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

The same pattern shows up in DOJ's grantmaking. The Administration's sweeping and irresponsible grant cuts included nearly \$50 million in support for victims of crime.<sup>53</sup> The cuts threatened or eliminated support for programs that provided sign language interpreters for deaf crime victims, helped law enforcement protect people with disabilities from human trafficking, and offered transitional housing and food assistance to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence.<sup>54</sup>

The Administration has also been breaking down the immigration protections Congress established for foreign national victims of crime.<sup>55</sup> By disregarding these protections, even when the victim is actively serving as a witness, the Administration is not only hurting victims, but also increasing the chances that their perpetrators go free and victimize again.<sup>56</sup>

There is a significant gap between this Administration's public safety rhetoric and its actual record. Pardoning offenders, abandoning criminal cases, destabilizing victim services, deporting victims, cutting violence prevention programs, and undermining local justice systems do not make communities safer. They make it harder for victims to recover, harder for law enforcement to do its job, and easier for serious criminals to avoid accountability.

## On Sanctuary Jurisdictions, There is a Smarter Path the Administration Refuses to Take

There is a clear alternative to threats, grant conditions, and coercion: focus on serious public safety cases and create a cooperation framework that local jurisdictions can actually say yes to. That means respecting local law and local policing needs while giving ICE a practical path to pursue individuals who pose real security or safety risks.

The Obama Administration's Priority Enforcement Program (PEP) was not perfect, but it reflected the right basic insight.<sup>57</sup> Many cities, counties, police departments, and sheriffs are not willing to let ICE dictate local policing or use local officers as a force multiplier for civil immigration enforcement. But some of those same jurisdictions may be willing to cooperate in serious cases if the federal government respects local law, local policy, resource limits, and community policing concerns.

PEP tried to work within that reality. It did not ask local police to become immigration agents or require jurisdictions to join 287(g)-style deputization programs. Instead, it created a more

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<sup>53</sup> Amy Solomon and Betsy Pearl. "DOJ Funding Update: A Deeper Look at the Cuts." Council on Criminal Justice, May 2025, <https://counciloncj.org/doj-funding-update-a-deeper-look-at-the-cuts/>.

<sup>54</sup> "Justice Department Slashes Essential Services for Crime Victims." Brennan Center for Justice, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/justice-department-slashes-essential-services-crime-victims>; "Georgia nonprofit balancing federal funding cuts while supporting South Asian American abuse, assault survivors." WABE, <https://www.wabe.org/georgia-nonprofit-balancing-federal-funding-cuts-while-supporting-south-asian-american-abuse-assault-survivors/>.

<sup>55</sup> Mel Leonor Barclay. "Immigrant victims of domestic violence and human trafficking sue over ICE policies." The 19th, Oct. 16, 2025, <https://19thnews.org/2025/10/u-t-visas-lawsuit-trump-immigration/>.

<sup>56</sup> Anna-Catherine Brigida, "After increased detentions, Harris County DA provides cards to identify immigrant witnesses." Houston Landing, Apr. 7, 2025, <https://www.houstonlanding.org/after-increased-detentions-harris-county-da-provides-cards-to-identify-immigrant-witnesses/>.

<sup>57</sup> "Priority Enforcement Program." U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2015, [https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Fact%20sheet/2015/pep\\_brochure.pdf](https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Fact%20sheet/2015/pep_brochure.pdf).

targeted framework around priority cases, release notifications, limited detention requests, and transfers to federal custody.<sup>58</sup> The purpose was to give ICE a way to pursue individuals who posed real public safety risks without forcing local jurisdictions to abandon their own rules or undermine the trust they need to investigate crime.

PEP sought to work with jurisdictions instead of against them. A city may reject blanket detainers, refuse to hold people without judicial authorization, or bar local officers from civil immigration enforcement—and still be willing to notify ICE before releasing someone convicted of a serious offense. That is smart law enforcement. The federal government gets more cooperation by making reasonable, legally sound requests tied to public safety than by threatening every jurisdiction that will not sign up for maximal immigration enforcement.

PEP showed that this middle path can work. Many jurisdictions that had previously resisted immigration detainers agreed to provide some form of cooperation under the program, including limited notification or transfer arrangements in priority cases.<sup>59</sup> For example, Philadelphia is now routinely treated as a sanctuary jurisdiction by this Administration, yet under PEP it provided ICE with limited release notifications in serious public safety cases.<sup>60</sup> That was a real public safety gain—and it happened because the federal government worked with the city instead of trying to bully it into submission.

The Administration has chosen the opposite approach. By threatening grants, attacking local officials, prioritizing immigration enforcement above real safety risks, and demanding all-or-nothing cooperation, it is making the politics harder and the public safety results worse. A serious administration would rebuild a targeted cooperation framework that jurisdictions can legally and practically join. This Administration would rather pick a fight.

## Conclusion

Improving public safety requires focusing on what works. Local police need public trust to solve crimes. They need resources to respond to calls, investigate shootings, protect victims, and clear cases. They need federal partners they can trust, who are focused on gun smuggling, drug trafficking, child exploitation, cyber threats, terrorism, and violent criminal networks. And when ICE asks for help, local officials need confidence that federal immigration enforcement is targeted, lawful, professional, and coordinated with local public safety needs.

This Administration is failing that test. It is demanding more from local law enforcement while giving them less. It is asking police and sheriffs to help ICE do its job while pulling federal agents away from the work those same local agencies need help with. It is threatening grants,

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<sup>58</sup> “Immigration Detainers Under the Priority Enforcement Program.” American Immigration Council, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/fact-sheet/immigration-detainers-under-priority-enforcement-program/>.

<sup>59</sup> Muzaffar Chishti and Sarah Pierce. “Trump’s Unfinished Business: A Shift in the U.S. Immigration Enforcement System.” Migration Policy Institute, Oct. 29, 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/trump-deportations-unfinished-mission>.

<sup>60</sup> “U.S. Sanctuary Jurisdiction List Following Executive Order 14287: Protecting American Communities From Criminal Aliens.” U.S. Department of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/ag/us-sanctuary-jurisdiction-list-following-executive-order-14287-protecting-american-communities>; “Executive Order No. 2015-07.” City of Philadelphia, 2015, <https://www.phila.gov/media/20210602144726/executive-order-2015-07.pdf>.

destabilizing victim services, diverting federal law enforcement capacity, and then blaming local jurisdictions for the breakdown in cooperation.

There is a smarter path. Focus immigration enforcement on serious public safety threats. Use lawful, transparent, and targeted requests. Respect local resource constraints and legal limits. Rebuild the kind of cooperation framework that skeptical jurisdictions can say yes to. That is how the federal government earns cooperation—not by demanding it, but by proving it is a reliable public safety partner. That is also how Congress can move this debate away from political theater and back toward the public safety mission we all claim to share.