



CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS
Michelle Lujan Grisham | Chairwoman
115TH CONGRESS

March 22, 2018

The Honorable Thomas Homan
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20563

Dear Acting Director Homan:

We write today to express our concern with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)'s recent plans to increase work site enforcement efforts. These I-9 audits would be counterproductive, reduce reporting of crimes, undermine safety and harm the economy. ICE should instead focus its limited resources on hardened criminals, not hard-working individuals who are positively contributing to our communities.

At a recent event at the Heritage Foundation, you announced that ICE would increase work site enforcement "by four to five times" in the current fiscal year.¹ It is our understanding that this drastic increase will likely continue for the foreseeable future. We know from experience that these efforts sow distrust of law enforcement among immigrant communities and ultimately undermine public safety. It is critical that our communities trust local authorities to keep them safe. If individuals are victims of a crime or if they see something suspicious, we want them to report these concerns to local law enforcement.

We believe this policy could fuel crime. As immigrant communities become fearful of and increasingly estranged from law enforcement, they are more vulnerable to being exploited by criminals. Transnational gangs already attempt to use immigrant communities as a host or hiding place for criminal activities. Increased enforcement efforts would no doubt exacerbate these practices and result in increased exploitation and reduced reporting of crimes. Immigrants are some of the most vulnerable among us—our priority should be to target and apprehend criminals and protect hardworking individuals from violence and crime, not to instill fear in our communities.

Furthermore, immigrants play an important role in key business sectors, including agriculture, hospitality and the service industries. Increased I-9 audits would have significant economic

¹ Tal Koplan, *ICE Chief Pledges Quadrupling or More of Workplace Crackdowns*, CNN, (Oct. 17, 2017) <https://www.cnn.com/2017/10/17/politics/ice-crackdown-workplaces/index.html>.

ramifications for these critical businesses and lead to possible labor shortages and increased workplace discrimination. In addition, these audits would place the onus on employers and require them to act as immigration officials.

Prioritizing I-9 audits diverts ICE resources from other critical enforcement priorities. Under this new policy, ICE will send armed agents to businesses around the country to search for employment paperwork irregularities rather than enlisting these agents to track down human traffickers, investigate terrorists, or apprehend members of transnational criminal organizations. This would be an irresponsible use of limited resources and we call on ICE to prioritize public safety threats.

Rather than quadrupling-down on this misguided policy, we urge ICE to take a more strategic and sophisticated approach to interior immigration enforcement: one that builds working partnerships with immigrant communities to apprehend dangerous criminals.

Thank you and we look forward to your response by April 15, 2018.

Sincerely,

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Michelle Lujan Bingham

Pete Hiler

Sam L. nm.3

Tony Cardenas CA-29

Junghy CA34

Anda T. Garcia CA-38

Parumpts FL-9

Luis' Carr CA-76

Jose Napolitano Ca 32

José N. Castro TD-20

Raúl M. Frijalva

Nanette Diaz Barragán

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R. L. AZ-01

Uyuphij

Juan C. Vargon CA-51

J. C. NV-04

Norma J. Jones

th NY-13

- (1) Jim Costa
- (2) Michelle Lujan Grisham
- (3) Pete Aguilar
- (4) Ben Ray Lujan
- (5) Tony Cardenas
- (6) Jimmy Gomez
- (7) Linda T. Sanchez
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- (11) Juakin Castro
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- (19) Norma J. Torres
- (20) Adriano Espaillat