

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
<https://oversight.house.gov>

Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly Committee on Oversight and Government Reform “A Hearing with Sanctuary City Mayors” March 5, 2025

Every member here today—Democrats and Republicans alike—agrees that violent criminals do not belong in our communities. We all want our cities to be safe and have zero tolerance for violent crime. Where we disagree is that my Republican colleagues prefer a selective application of the law to shield the President of the United States from accountability and this Administration from the rule of law.

In America, we uphold the rule of law, independent from partisan politics and without fear or favor. Betraying these convictions, President Trump’s Department of Justice has tried to force the conditional dismissal of very serious charges against one of our witnesses in exchange for the witness’ total and complete submission to Trump’s radical immigration agenda. And the DOJ has done so over the objections of a Republican acting United States Attorney whom President Trump appointed.

Rather than enabling a flagrant corrupt quid pro quo, seven federal prosecutors, including some Republicans, resigned. One of them, a former clerk to Chief Justice John Roberts, said that anyone in his position, “would know that our laws and traditions do not allow using the prosecutorial power to influence other citizens, much less elected officials, in this way.” History is calling on us now to stand up for these laws and traditions.

Doing so also demands an affirmation of state and local sovereignty in determining the most effective ways to keep residents safe in compliance with federal law. To deny this sovereignty is an assault on the independence of every American city across the nation.

Today, Republicans have hauled in the mayors of four major American cities to frame them as “lawless” because those cities have some limits on how intrusively and aggressively their own officials can conduct federal immigration operations and responsibilities.

Let’s be clear: the state and local laws that Republicans have issue with today are in full compliance with federal law. They do not obstruct ICE from carrying out its duties. And they are backed by evidence demonstrating that they keep people safer — counties with laws that do not honor extrajudicial civil detainers had significantly lower levels of violent crime than counties that don’t have such laws.

Mayors, police chiefs, sheriffs, and local leaders have made clear that the way to combat violent crime is allowing local police to do their job of ensuring public safety in their own communities—

not commandeering them to spend limited time and resources rounding up and detaining nonviolent immigrants who pose no threat.

Forcing local law enforcement to carry out the federal government's immigration duties also discourages residents from coming forward to share information with the police about violent crimes for fear that they, or someone close to them, will be detained or deported. This is simply bad policy and hurts all Americans.

At this year's Conservative Political Action Conference, Border Czar Tom Homan said that he is "bringing hell" to the city of Boston until it complies with his demands.

The Republican crusade against local independence doesn't just undermine public safety in our communities—it is blatantly cruel and un-American.

Kenia Colindres, her husband, Wilson Rogelio Velasquez Cruz, and their three children came to the United States in 2022 seeking asylum after escaping violence in Honduras. Wilson was granted a five-year work permit, allowing him to work at a tire shop and provide for his family. Kenia said that her husband had never been in trouble and was, "a man of God."

On January 26, 2025, the family of five was in church when Wilson was lured out by ICE agents waiting to arrest him. Despite having a valid work permit, the Trump Administration refused to hear his appeal and is deporting him. Wilson was the sole breadwinner for their family. Now Kenia must worry about how she's going to pay the bills and take care of her children, on top of her fears that she and her children might also be deported.

And last week, in El Monte, California, Xitlali, a woman who is battling bone cancer, tearfully watched as her mother, Yolanda, cried inconsolably as she was detained by ICE agents who refused to even present the detention order. Yolanda was Xitlali's sole caretaker and has no criminal record.

ICE is also conducting massive raids in cities and towns that have led to the wrongful detention of U.S. citizens, including Native Americans and military veterans. One school district sent a letter to parents warning that ICE may board school buses and demand documents from children. Children are afraid to go to school—one reportedly wrote a goodbye note to their friends, saying "If ICE takes me don't forget about me." The Trump Administration has sent Venezuelan immigrants to Guantanamo Bay and deported Asian asylum seekers to Panama, where many were placed in camps in forests near the Darien Gap.

Neighbors are disappearing. Kids—American and immigrant alike—are terrified of losing their parents. Families are being ripped apart. But cruelty is the point. And bringing hell to American cities is the plan.

America needs immigration policies that keep everyone safe and make the country stronger. If President Trump was serious about delivering these solutions, he would not be attacking the Constitution's guarantee of citizenship to children born in the United States.

To see our country through this period of darkness, we need leaders who stand up for the rule of law, public safety, and American families—leaders like the mayors testifying today. I thank them again for being here and look forward to their testimony.

###

Contact: Alexandra Bell, Communications Director (202) 226-5181

