

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Todd M. Lyons
Acting Director
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Director Lyons:

I write to express my alarm at the recent presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents at the Chesterfield County Courthouse. While individuals who commit crimes should face the consequences of their actions, it appears that you have focused your attention on individuals trying to comply with the law rather than those who actively pose a threat to our community. These actions have a chilling effect not only on those trying to comply with the law, but those seeking justice for themselves or others. As a result, your actions hinder public safety rather than protect it.

Over the course of several days in June, ICE detained 15 individuals who appeared at the Chesterfield County Courthouse, including 10 individuals who presented themselves to the Courthouse voluntarily to address civil infractions.¹ Two-thirds of those detained either had no prior convictions or committed only minor civil or traffic infractions. Those seeking to stay in compliance with the laws should not be subject to arbitrary arrest and detention. Moreover, ICE provided no notice to county or court officials that they would be entering the Courthouse and operated in plain clothes and without identifying themselves.

The methods employed by ICE in Chesterfield County exemplify a shocking change in tactics to enforce our immigration laws that includes raids on courthouses across the nation, aggressively threatening people on the streets, arresting lawful permanent residents, and engaging in racial profiling. This represents disturbingly authoritarian behavior that not only undermines our safety but also threatens the very foundation of our constitutional democracy.

We must seek to foster cooperation among all community members, regardless of immigration or residency status, to ensure the safety of everyone who resides in that community. Only through trust in law enforcement and the judicial system will community members come forward to report crime and serve as witnesses in criminal proceedings. When this trust is ruptured, especially among vulnerable populations who fear for their own place in the community, we see that crime goes unreported and civilians become less willing to engage with law enforcement to cooperate in keeping the community safe.

¹ <https://www.wric.com/news/local-news/chesterfield-county/immigration-attorney-weighs-in-after-ice-detains-15-at-chesterfield-courthouse/>

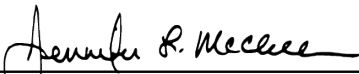
We are already seeing the consequences of the Department's actions. In Richmond's Southwood neighborhood, a predominantly Latino community, the police department reports a 34 percent drop in 911 calls, directly linked to heightened ICE activity. Local law enforcement is alarmed by the chilling effect this has had on community members' willingness to report crimes or cooperate with investigators.²

I share their concerns. By barging into courthouses, like what took place in Chesterfield, ICE exacerbates this problem and undermines the security of communities like mine across the nation. In order to restore trust among our immigrant communities and protect the civil rights and liberties of everyone in our community, I urge ICE to cease these courthouse raids in both Chesterfield and around the country. To address these growing concerns among law enforcement and community members, I request detailed answers to these questions by August 6, 2025:

1. What is the review process conducted to determine which individuals' presence at a municipal courthouse in compliance with court-mandated orders or summons rises to the level of "reasonable suspicion" that they are in the country illegally and pose a public safety or national security threat?
2. As you are aware, both citizens and non-citizens present in the United States have a constitutional right to due process. Can you provide assurances that each individual questioned or detained was granted these rights?
3. How many individuals detained by ICE at the Chesterfield County Courthouse are still in DHS custody? If so, where have they been moved, and is the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) taking steps to allow contact with legal representation?
4. Do those who were detained in ICE custody have any dependents? If so, did ICE take the appropriate steps to ensure those dependents were in the safe custody of family members or the appropriate authorities?
5. Has ICE sufficiently determined that no individuals with lawful permanent status or citizenship were detained? Have all of these individuals been released from ICE custody?
6. There have been disturbing instances of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents detained by ICE for extended periods of time in similar immigration operations. What steps is ICE taking to avoid accidentally sweeping up U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents in these courthouse raids?

I look forward to your prompt response to address these concerns.

Sincerely,


Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress

² https://richmond.com/news/local/crime-courts/article_0e466f97-72f0-4521-ab3e-0d5846d9de45.html