



Joseph F. Rice School of Law

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The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Garcia
109 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Statement to the Bicameral Public Forum pm the Violent Use of Force by DHS Agents

Dear Senator Blumenthal & Representative Garcia,

Thank you for inviting me to testify on the violent tactics and disproportionate use of force by agents of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Please consider this letter my written comments to accompany my testimony. The contents of this letter and my testimony are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Joseph F. Rice School of Law or the University of South Carolina.

My name is Seth Stoughton. I am a tenured law professor at the University of South Carolina. I also serve as the Faculty Director of the Excellence in Policing & Public Safety Program, which was initially funded by the state legislature to work collaboratively with law enforcement stakeholders to improve policing and public safety outcomes by providing training and professional development, as well as technical assistance and research. I also hold a courtesy appointment as a Professor in the University of South Carolina's Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

I have conducted academic research on policing since 2012. My research focuses on the regulation of policing, including tactics, the use of force, police investigations, agency policies, police culture, and industry practices. I have published extensively on these topics, writing academic articles, book chapters, and a book on evaluating police uses of force. I was among a group of scholars commissioned by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to write a report

on the use of force by police.

I am active in policing beyond publishing academic research. I am a Member of the American Law Institute and served, by invitation, as an Adviser to the ALI's *Principles of the Law, Policing*. I have developed and provided training on the investigation, review, and evaluation of police uses of force to multiple police agencies and police leadership institutes. I have formally presented on policing issues over 175 times to legal audiences (e.g., the American Judges Association, the Conference of Chief Justices, and multiple judicial conferences, etc.), law enforcement audiences (e.g., the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center; federal Inspectors General & Inspectors General Investigators; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; and the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, etc.) and legislative audiences. And I currently serve, by invitation, on the Civilian Advisory Council of my local law enforcement agency, the Columbia (SC) Police Department. I am also regularly retained to provide expert review and testimony in the context of police litigation.

I am also a former officer, having served with the Tallahassee Police Department. I was employed as an officer for a total of five and a half years, serving as a full-time officer from March 2001 until October 2005, and as a reserve (part-time) officer from November 2005 until June 2006. During the course of my service with the department, I was assigned to the Uniform Patrol Division.

My comments today are predicated not just on my own experiences, but on my expertise in policing.

The current administration's approach to immigration enforcement falls far short of professional norms This is not policing. It is not normal. And it is not professionally acceptable.

Let me be clear: this is not about federal immigration policy. Reasonable people can disagree about the scope and contours of immigration policy while still agreeing on something more fundamental: that enforcement must be performed professionally, lawfully, and safely.

That is not what we are seeing right now.

DHS officials at all levels have demonstrated, publicly and repeatedly, a remarkable lack of basic professional competence. It defies reality to suggest that the entirety of the federal immigration apparatus is unfamiliar with the norms and practices developed by dedicated police practitioners over decades. Instead, administration officials seem willing to sacrifice the standards of professional policing and undermine public safety to promote the unchecked expansion of political power.

Federal immigration authorities' egregious deviations from long-standing professional norms are doing incalculable damage to critical police-community relations, putting officers and community

members in unnecessary danger, and undermining, rather than protecting, public safety.

I am not the only policing expert to make these observations. The day after the shooting of Alex Pretti, the International Association of Chiefs of Police—the oldest, largest professional policing organization in the world—released a statement that started by pointing out “the need for stability, professionalism, and respect for constitutional principles.”¹ The IACP went on to emphasize that “effective public safety depends on comprehensive training, investigative integrity, adherence to the rule of law, and strong coordination among federal, state, and local partners.” The IACP statement reaffirmed their “commitment to the constitutional protections that safeguard individuals from unlawful or unreasonable searches and seizures, recognizing that public trust and effective policing depend on faithful adherence to these fundamental rights.” And it urged everyone to support “calm, lawful engagement and policies grounded in proven practice that strengthen accountability while preserving the capacity of law enforcement agencies to coordinate effectively and protect communities.”

The IACP is no progressive outlier in policing. The IACP is a traditional, establishment-oriented policing organization, a standard-bearer for conventional wisdom and police orthodoxy. For anyone with experience deciphering the kind of institutionally constrained language that shows up in open letters, the IACP’s recent statement is an expression of profound disagreement with what federal immigration authorities are doing.

That disagreement is well deserved.

What we are seeing in this moment is a lack interagency collaboration, or even basic communication, reducing both efficiency and public trust. We see poor tactics that put community members and federal agent themselves in unnecessary danger. And we see profound failures of leadership after critical incidents.

Poor Operational Planning & Lack of Collaboration

Federal law enforcement agencies—including the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; the Drug Enforcement Administration; the United States Marshals Service; the Secret Service, and a host of others—have worked collaboratively with state and local officials for decades. They do so because they recognize that effective policing requires intimate local knowledge, which federal agencies will almost always lack.

Collaboration comes in the form of joint agency task forces; since their emergence in the 1970s,² hundreds of joint agency task forces have focused on a wide range of public safety issues including

¹ International Association of Chiefs of Police, *IACP Calls on White House to Convene Joint Federal–State–Local Discussion on Public Safety*, Jan. 25, 2026, <https://www.theiacp.org/news/official-statements/iacp-calls-on-white-house-to-convene-joint-federal-state-local-discussion>.

² Larry E. Sullivan et al., *Joint Task Forces*, in *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LAW ENFORCEMENT* (2004), <https://sk.sagepub.com/ency/edvol/lawenforcement/chpt/joint-task-forces>.

vehicle thefts, drug trafficking, kidnapping and crimes against children, robberies, gangs and organized crime, opioid fraud and abuse, violent crimes, fugitive apprehension, financial crimes, and counterterrorism, among others. Interagency collaboration is an important force multiplier; expanding local access to investigative resources and giving federal agents access to local insights that they would otherwise lack. Joint agency cooperation can facilitate operations that are greater than the sum of their parts.

Collaboration can come in the form of deconfliction; when federal agencies engage in independent operations, they provide the local authorities with advanced notice about the location and general nature of their activities. Deconfliction helps avoid the kind of catastrophic mistakes that can occur when the local police respond to calls about non-uniformed, visibly armed federal agents.

Collaboration can also involve information sharing, both through formal mechanisms like the National Network of Fusion Centers and more informal communications through more routine contacts between agency personnel. Information sharing helps agencies align their priorities and efficiently use their limited resources.

Despite both the well-known benefits of collaboration and the clear risks of *not* collaborating, federal immigration authorities have not followed well-established channels for interagency collaboration. Instead, they demand compliance and view any divergence from their demands as obstructive refusal.

Instead of working with local partners in a way that can ease local tensions, increasing the overall effectiveness of police operations, DHS sends in swarms of agents who appear to lack meaningful experience or training in local policing and who have no connections with, no ties to, and no concern for the communities they operate in.

Police agencies have fielded calls from panicked residents reporting kidnappings-in-progress, sending officers to respond with lights and siren only to learn that federal immigration authorities were operating in plain clothes and unmarked vehicles.³ The lack of collaboration creates unnecessary fear in the community and largely avoidable challenges for local public safety officials, dramatically increasing the potential for disastrous misidentifications.

Worse, it has contributed to a number of incidents in which criminal actors take advantage of public confusion by pretending to be ICE agents. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has warned, “These criminal impersonations make it difficult for the community to distinguish between legitimate officers conducting lawful law enforcement action and imposters engaging in criminal activity, which damages trust between the local community and law enforcement officers.”⁴

³ Alex Stone, *Los Angeles Police Responded to a Kidnapping Call. But Instead Found an ICE Operation*, GOOD MORNING AMERICA, June 25, 2025, <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/news/story/los-angeles-police-responded-kidnapping-call-found-ice-123204661>.

⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of Partner Engagement, *Public Safety Awareness Report*,

The lack of collaboration also gets in the way of enforcing immigration laws against the one group for whom there is broad public support for enforcement: individuals who have recently committed serious violent offenses. The 56 Fugitive Apprehension Task Forces organized by the US Marshals Service focus on locating and apprehending the “most dangerous fugitives.”⁵ These task forces depend heavily on their local partners; city and county officers and investigators almost invariably have more information and better contacts with the community. By aligning priorities, information, and resources, targeted enforcement operations are broadly effective; in 2024, for example, they resulted in the arrest or clearance of 9,762 sex offenders and 5,337 homicide suspects.⁶

By locking out state and local partners, federal immigration officials have deprived themselves of precision. This is a problem, because highly targeted police efforts have long been known to be the most effective form of enforcement. Having deprived themselves of a scalpel, federal officials have fallen back on the hammer, using blind, drag-net style enforcement tactics that are demonstrably overbroad and remarkably less effective. According to government data, more than half of ICE detainees have no criminal record, and only a very small percentage have been convicted of any violent crimes. That’s the predictable result of abandoning any pretense of targeting dangerous offenders and instead scouting out day laborers at Home Depot,⁷ conducting worksite raids at restaurants,⁸ setting up at schools⁹ and hospitals,¹⁰ and making apparently random traffic stops of people of color (including off-duty officers).¹¹

Unsafe Tactics in the Field

We see similar departures from established professional norms when it comes to what immigration enforcement agents are doing in the field. Professional policing understands that identification and accountability are foundational to legitimacy and safety. Officers wear standardized uniforms,

<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/26364028/20251016-fbi-alert-re-ice-impersonators.pdf>.

⁵ United States Marshals Service, *Fugitive Task Forces*, <https://www.usmarshals.gov/what-we-do/fugitive-investigations/fugitive-task-forces>.

⁶ United States Marshals Service, *Fact Sheet: Fugitive Apprehension 2025*, <https://www.usmarshals.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/2025-Fugitive-Apprehension.pdf>.

⁷ Arriana McLymore and Ross Kerber, *Amid ICE Raids, Some Home Depot Investors Want to Know How Law Enforcement Uses its Surveillance Data*, REUTERS, Jan. 16, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/amid-ice-raids-some-home-depot-investors-want-know-how-law-enforcement-uses-its-2026-01-16/>.

⁸ Pedro Rios, *ICE Raids in San Diego Foreshadowed the Roundups, Protests now Spreading Across California*, CALMATTERS, June 13, 2025, <https://calmatters.org/commentary/2025/06/ice-san-diego-foreshadowed-protests/>.

⁹ Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj, *ICE Agents Near Schools Disrupts Attendance, Traumatizes Students*, RIPPLE, Jan. 23, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/ripple/2026/01/21/federal-immigration-enforcement-near-schools-disrupts-attendance-traumatizes-students-and-damages-their-academic-performance/>.

¹⁰ Gosnia Wozniacka, *ICE Detains Family Seeking Emergency Care for Child at Portland Hospital*, THE OREGONIAN, Jan. 23, 2026, <https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2026/01/ice-detains-family-seeking-emergency-care-for-child-at-portland-hospital.html>.

¹¹ Christopher Cann, *ICE Agents Drew Guns on Off-Duty Officer in Minnesota, Chief Says*, USA TODAY, Jan. 20, 2026, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2026/01/20/immigration-agents-minnesota-police-officer/88268058007/>.

clearly marked badges, and other visible agency identifiers so that the public—victims, witnesses, suspects, and bystanders—and other officers can instantly recognize them as legitimate. The image of policing in the United States has long been one of the uniform and badge; the adoption of regularized uniforms was one of the first practices to evolve in modern policing, dating from the late 19th century. For generations, state and local officers have been proud to hold themselves out as the identifiable face of the rule of law, even when it is unpopular to do so.

Uniforms and clear identification reduces confusion and prevents tragic misidentifications. Some of the most horrific “blue on blue” shootings—situations where officers mistakenly wound or kill fellow officers¹²—involve officers who are not readily identifiable as officers.¹³ There are also tragic examples of community members defending themselves from plain clothes, unidentified officers whom they perceive, quite reasonably, to be criminal actors. Unidentified or masked officers on the street create a situation where civilians, local police, and even armed vigilantes cannot reliably tell friend from foe, increasing the risk of escalation or injury.

Contrast this with how federal immigration enforcement has been conducted recently. Agents have operated in plain clothes, without identifying themselves or their agency (sometimes even when directly asked). They often wear masks that obscure their identity, suggesting that they are afraid or embarrassed to be associated with the work they do. In Minneapolis and elsewhere, residents and legal observers noted masked agents knocking on vehicle windows, approaching people, and making apprehensions.¹⁴ These practices contradict long-standing precedents for clear identification is central to lawful policing and community safety, sowing fear and uncertainty about who is actually enforcing the law. They also undermine officer safety. In November, an officer in Fullerton, California, intervened after seeing a man wearing a t-shirt exit his car and point a gun at the woman in the car behind him, learning only after fortuitously not opening fire that man was an ICE agent who had drawn his weapon because he thought the woman had been following him.¹⁵

Perhaps the most startling deviation from long-standing tactical practices in policing is the frequency of federal agents shooting at moving vehicles—a practice that agencies have strictly limited for decades, starting with the NYPD in the 1970s. National consensus among organizations like the IACP and the Fraternal Order of Police emphasizes that shooting at a moving vehicle is tactically unsound: it rarely stops the car and often creates an unguided hazard if the driver is

¹² Department of Homeland Security, Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers, Applied Research Branch, *Responses to Encounters, Uniformed Officer Responses to Encounters with Plain Clothes Officers*, https://www.fletc.gov/sites/default/files/ARB_%20Newsletter-2016.pdf.

¹³ *Albuquerque Police Release Video from Cop-on-Cop Shooting*, NBC NEWS, Apr. 1, 2-16, <https://www.nbcnews.com/video/albuquerque-police-release-video-from-cop-on-cop-shooting-656330819599>.

¹⁴ Leila Fadel et al., *Masked Immigration Agents are Spurring Fear and Confusion Across the U.S.*, MORNING EDITION, July 10, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/09/nx-s1-5440311/ice-raids-masked-agents>.

¹⁵ Graig Graziosi, *California Cop Tried to Stop a Man Pointing a Gun at a Female Driver. It Was a Plainclothes ICE Agent*, INDEPENDENT, Nov. 11, 2025, <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/crime/california-cop-ice-gun-driver-b2863314.html>.

incapacitated.¹⁶ Police training is abundantly clear: it is safer to step out of a vehicle's path of travel than to shoot at it. Despite this long-standing professional standard, federal immigration authorities have shot at moving vehicles at least ten times since August 2025.¹⁷

Agents' poor tactics may be contributing to those shootings. Professional policing cautions against overly aggressive action by, for example, attempting to force entry into vehicles or breaking vehicle windows unless there is a clear and immediate threat justifying such force. Someone who merely refuses to exit a vehicle immediately upon an officer's initial demand does not present such a threat. Professional norms dictate that when a subject is non-compliant but not fleeing, officers should prioritize de-escalation over tactics that could trigger fearful, active resistance. That is not what video footage and subsequent reporting from recent federal immigration operations show. Instead, as one story describes, "Footage of the incidents shows agents swarming vehicles, smashing windows and trying to pry open car doors within seconds of approaching drivers," and almost always doing so without establishing the degree of situational control that such inherently dangerous techniques demand.¹⁸

Another well-established tactical principle emphasizes that officers should avoid taking positions directly in front of or behind a vehicle. The IACP's Model Policy on Motor Vehicle Stops is unequivocal: "At no time should the officer or others stand in front of, between, or behind the stopped vehicles." For decades, police training has described stepping into a vehicle's path of travel as "a very poor tactic"¹⁹ that is "ill-advised"²⁰ and contrary to "common sense."²¹ The reasons are obvious: the human body can't possibly stop a vehicle, so there is no tactical benefit to stepping in front of a vehicle. And the tactical risks of doing so are substantial; officers can be struck, run over, or dragged. Those risks are serious, but easy to avoid so long as officers stay out of a vehicle's path of travel. Inexplicably, videos of immigration enforcement operations show federal agents stepping into²² or maintaining positions²³ directly in front of operable vehicles,

¹⁶ International Association of Chiefs of Police, *National Consensus Policy and Discussion Paper on Use of Force*, July 2020, https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/National_Consensus_Policy_On_Use_Of_Force%2007102020%20v3.pdf.

¹⁷ Christopher Cann, *Moving Cars, Panic, Gunfire. Immigration Shootings Fit Growing Pattern*, USA TODAY, Jan. 14, 2026, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2026/01/14/immigration-agents-shootings-ice-border-patrol/88156239007/>.

¹⁸ Christopher Cann, *Moving Cars, Panic, Gunfire. Immigration Shootings Fit Growing Pattern*, USA TODAY, Jan. 14, 2026, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2026/01/14/immigration-agents-shootings-ice-border-patrol/88156239007/>.

¹⁹ David Griffith, *Cops vs. Cars*, POLICE MAGAZINE, June 1, 2005, <https://www.policemag.com/articles/cops-vs-cars>.

²⁰ Kevin R. Madison, *Understanding Officer-Created Jeopardy*, POLICE MAGAZINE, June 20, 2025, <https://www.policemag.com/articles/understanding-officer-created-jeopardy>.

²¹ Craig Stapp, *Stay Out of the Way*, POLICE MAGAZINE, Apr. 1, 2006, <https://www.policemag.com/articles/stay-out-of-the-way>.

²² *Video Shows ICE Officer's Point of View, Renee Good's Last Words Before Being Shot*, CBS EVENING NEWS, JAN. 9, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EogLZfp2iUI>.

²³ *ICE Agents Drag Out Person Out Of Car, Deploy Pepper Spray During Clash With Protesters In Minnesota*, FORBES BREAKING NEWS, Jan. 22, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkK7aj4pWso>.

predictably increasing the likelihood of a shooting.

We have also seen uses of force that appear, on their face, to be deeply problematic or outright excessive. An agent in Cicero, Illinois deploying pepper spray into the window of a moving vehicle with a toddler inside.²⁴ An agent in Chicago who, from a position on a nearby roof, shot a minister in the head with PepperBalls as he stood on the sidewalk below.²⁵ And agents in Minneapolis, New York, Los Angeles, and elsewhere shoving people to the ground, including some people who appear unaware that agents were even approaching them.

Leadership Failures After Critical Incidents

When the actions of a law enforcement officer result in a loss of life, as we have seen in the killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, professional policing follows a disciplined protocol: conduct a thorough investigation while sharing what is known, identifying what is unknown, and avoiding speculation. Competent leaders know that premature narratives can contaminate investigations and corrode trust. Former DHS officials²⁶ and even Border Czar Tom Homan²⁷ have said as much.

But we have seen senior officials issue definitive, exonerating conclusions within hours of an incident—far sooner than would be possible with any careful inquiry. DHS Secretary Kristi Noem publicly framed Alex Pretti, the most recent individual shot by federal immigration authorities, as someone who arrived “to inflict maximum damage and to kill law enforcement.”²⁸ This *after* the release of videos show Pretti holding a phone in the moments before agents took him down and apparently *not* reaching for his gun. Customs and Border Patrol Commander Greg Bovino similarly speculated about Pretti’s supposed intentions, portraying the incident as an averted massacre and praising agents for “taking him down before he was able” to shoot.²⁹ Such premature statements do not merely “get the message out”; they contaminate investigations and irreparably damage public trust.

This lack of accountability is further compounded by the propagation of legal misinformation. Vice President JD Vance’s assertion that agents are “protected by absolute immunity” is legally

²⁴ Marni Rose McFall, *ICE Throws Pepper Spray into Car with Toddler Inside, Video Appears to Show*, NEWSWEEK, Nov. 10, 2025, <https://www.newsweek.com/ice-pepper-spray-video-viral-homeland-security-chicago-illinois-immigration-11020112>.

²⁵ Nicole Sganga et al., *We Asked a Former Federal Agent to Review Videos Showing Use of Force Against Protesters. Here's What He Found*, CBS NEWS, Nov. 11, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/former-federal-agent-ice-use-of-force-against-protesters/>.

²⁶ Brittany Gibson, *What DHS’ Own Rules Say on the Deadly ICE Shooting in Minneapolis*, AXIOS, Jan. 8, 2026, <https://www.axios.com/2026/01/08/dhs-use-of-force-minneapolis-ice-shooting>.

²⁷ Caitlin Yilek, *Trump’s Border Czar on Minneapolis ICE Shooting: “Let the Investigation Play Out”*, CBS NEWS, Jan. 7, 2026, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trumps-border-czar-minneapolis-ice-shooting/>.

²⁸ Mary Clare Jalonick, *Moderate Sen. Jacky Rosen Urges Noem’s Impeachment as Dem Fury Grows Over Minneapolis Shooting*, ASSOCIATED PRESS, Jan. 25, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/hooting-minneapolis-protests-ice-immigration-6eab65fcf808227bc02c19acfb94cae3>.

²⁹ Roberto Schmidt, *The Instant Smear Campaign Against Border Patrol Shooting Victim Alex Pretti*, WIRED, Jan. 24, 2026, <https://www.wired.com/story/the-instant-smear-campaign-against-border-patrol-shooting-victim-alex-pretti/>.

incorrect. While absolute immunity is a real legal doctrine—it precludes certain government actors (including prosecutors and judges operating in the scope of their official duties) from being sued—it does not apply to federal law enforcement officers. They can assert qualified immunity in federal civil rights cases, and they can argue that they have Supremacy Clause immunity if they are criminally prosecuted by state authorities. Both of these doctrines are limited: qualified immunity only applies when the scope of the constitutional rights under consideration have not been “clearly established,” and Supremacy Clause immunity only applies when a federal officer is acting within the scope of their duties in a way that is necessary and proper. No legal or logical basis supports the claim that federal agents enjoy absolute immunity.

By claiming agents are untouchable, the administration signals that oversight is performative and outcomes are preordained. This is exemplified by the Department of Justice’s decision to sideline its own Civil Rights Division in the Renee Good investigation, declaring that there was “no basis to open a criminal civil rights investigation” and declining to pursue the standard inquiry that every professional police organization would expect as routine.³⁰ That decision was so contrary to standard procedure that it sparked a wave of resignations from seasoned federal prosecutors³¹ and an FBI supervisor.³² These resignations are an extraordinary warning sign that critical safeguards are being bypassed or weakened.

We are in the terrifying position of seeing federal investigative agencies unwilling or unable to conduct the kind of thorough and meticulous investigations that these incidents demand.

Conclusion

Those who value lawful, legitimate, effective, and efficient law enforcement should be deeply disturbed by what is happening. Dragnet tactics, chaotic and unnecessarily violent operations, and premature exonerations do not advance public safety; they leave communities terrified and confused, place local police officers at risk, and put federal agents in unnecessary danger. The consequences are grave, and as we have seen repeatedly, fatal.

The current state of federal immigration enforcement is not the unavoidable friction of difficult work. It is the foreseeable result of intentional choices to ignore well-established professional norms. These principles—codified by organizations like the IACP and the Police Executive Research Forum—are taught in academies and reinforced by decades of experience precisely

³⁰ Alanna Durkin Richer and Eric Tucker, *Justice Department Sees No Basis for Civil Rights Probe in Minnesota ICE Shooting, Official Says*, ASSOCIATED PRESS, Jan. 13, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/justice-department-resignations-renee-good-f456dc01c7d72e15662016193b2e383e>.

³¹ Richard Luscombe, *Federal Prosecutors Quit in Protest Over Lack of Investigation into ICE Shooting*, THE GUARDIAN, Jan. 13, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/13/doj-attorneys-resign-minneapolis-ice-shooting>.

³² Edwawrd Helmore, *FBI Supervisor Resigns After Trying to Investigate Agent Who Shot Renee Good*, THE GUARDIAN, Jan. 25, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/25/fbi-tracee-mergen-resigns-ice-renee-good-investigation>.

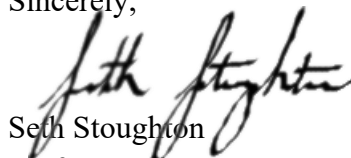
because they protect both the public and the police.

Abandoning these long-standing principles, threatening state and local officials, sidelining highly experienced and deeply dedicated public servants, precluding accountability by actively inhibiting any meaningful review—these decisions are not normal. History suggests these actions are the hallmarks of authoritarianism.

Equally concerning is the effect that this administration’s approach will have in the future as the thousands of ICE agents currently being hired eventually change jobs, moving into other federal agencies or taking positions in state and local law enforcement. What we’re seeing right now is not normal. But if it is not addressed, it will become normal. That will set professional policing back decades.

NOTE: Some of the information in this document was modified from a editorial of which I was the primary author.³³

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seth Stoughton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Seth Stoughton
Professor of Law
Faculty Director, Excellence in Policing
& Public Safety Program

³³ Seth W. Stoughton et al., *What Federal Immigration Enforcement Is Doing Isn't Policing—and it Isn't Normal*, JUSTIA VERDICT, Jan. 29, 2026, <https://verdict.justia.com/2026/01/29/what-federal-immigration-enforcement-is-doing-isnt-policing-and-it-isnt-normal>.