

JULIA BROWNLEY
26TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES
AND THE ENVIRONMENT



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January 29, 2025

Acting Secretary Benjamine Huffman
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20528-0525

Acting Director Caleb Vitello
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20536-5010

Dear Acting Secretary Huffman and Acting Director Vitello,

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the recent U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations conducted in my district, in the cities of Oxnard and Santa Paula, and to seek urgent answers about its legal basis, execution, and impact on our community.

California's 26th Congressional District is home to a diverse and hard-working population – families, small business owners, service workers, educators, veterans, and farmworkers – who all contribute to the social and economic fabric of Ventura County. While my constituents and I understand the important role ICE plays in protecting our nation from violent criminals, sex traffickers, and gang members, we also believe ICE should focus its resources on deporting those who pose a real danger to the public, not hard working individuals who are making positive contributions to our nation, working in hard-to-fill jobs, paying taxes, and raising their children.

The sudden and ominous nature of ICE's presence and reported use of scare tactics has sown fear, disrupted lives, and raised serious questions about ICE's adherence to due process and established policies. According to reports and eyewitness accounts, there are significant concerns about the conduct of ICE's enforcement activities, including potential violations of civil rights and the harmful impact on public trust. Public reports of ICE harassing vehicle drivers and ominously lurking around our public schools are deeply concerning to many of my constituents. Agriculture industry representatives have also contacted my office to express concerns about the impacts of ICE's activities on farm operations, as farmworkers – who are essential for feeding our nation – may fear showing up to work.

In light of these concerns, I am requesting prompt answers to the following questions:

1. How many individuals were arrested during ICE's activities in my district? What is the status of each individual arrested, and are any facing imminent deportation proceedings? Has anyone been placed in expedited removal or administrative removal?

2. Why were Oxnard and Santa Paula targeted for ICE's enforcement tactics like stopping vehicles? What sparked this sudden effort?
3. Where are individuals who were taken being detained?
4. Did ICE agents enter non-public areas of businesses or residential buildings? If so, did they have judicial warrants authorizing such access, or was consent obtained? Please provide details on any permissions granted, including by whom and under what circumstances.
5. Did ICE have specific arrest warrants for individuals in Oxnard and Santa Paula, or were any arrests made without a warrant? If warrantless arrests were made, did ICE comply with the nationwide warrantless arrest policy under the Castanon Nava settlement, including requirements for probable cause and proper documentation?
6. What criteria did ICE agents use in determining whom to question? Were race, ethnicity, or language proficiency factors in those decisions? For each person questioned, please specify the justification for their detainment or interrogation.
7. Were U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, DACA recipients, visa holders, or veterans among those questioned or detained? If so, how were their rights protected during this operation?
8. What measures, if any, were taken to engage with local law enforcement, community organizations, or legal aid groups before or after this action to ensure transparency and due process?
9. For individuals detained, how many have had access to legal counsel? How many have been allowed to notify family members and loved ones of their location and reasons for detention? What is the process for such notifications, and what is the process for loved ones and legal counsel to visit with or talk to those detained?

As you may know, this enforcement action has had a chilling effect on the entire community, causing fear among families, workers, students, and business owners. Many residents are now afraid to go to work, take their children to school, or seek medical care out of concern for their safety and legal status. Furthermore, such actions erode trust in law enforcement and local government, making it more difficult for authorities to maintain public safety and community cooperation. Targeting hardworking immigrants is also contrary to our values as a nation, as we are a nation made up largely of immigrants whose ancestors all came to the United States to make better lives for themselves and their families.

The 26th Congressional District of California is a vibrant and inclusive region where people of all backgrounds work hard to build better lives for themselves and their families. Actions that instill fear and division harm not only those directly impacted but also the broader social and economic stability of our communities. Given these serious concerns, I request a detailed response to my questions no later than February 12, 2025.

Sincerely,



JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress