ICE's impact on Democratic Los Angeles

Introduction:

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in 2003. It is a federal law enforcement agency within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). With an annual budget of around $6 billion and a workforce of over 20,000 employees, ICE is tasked with enforcing border control, trade, customs, and immigration laws. Previously, presidents utilized ICE to investigate severe criminal cases related to drug and human trafficking. However, there has been a growing focus on ICE during Trump's second administration term, having deported roughly 540,000 people. Many cities have seen ICE surges, including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Boston, and Las Vegas. ICE, today, has had a profound impact on the United States since its inception in 2003.

The DHS has spoken positively on ICE during the Trump administration. They note that the agency has saved taxpayers more than $13.2 billion, saved countless lives, and strengthened communities.

"In the last year, fentanyl trafficking at the southern border has also been cut by more than half compared to the same period in 2024," said DHS Secretary Kristi Noem. "The U.S. Coast Guard alone seized enough cocaine to kill more than 177 million Americans."

In the 2024 presidential campaign, Trump promised to close the border as part of his immigration policies. As Norah O'Donnell notes, he largely won the election on his promise to close the border. In an interview with President Donald Trump, O'Donnell asked if some of the ICE raids have gone too far. While acknowledging illegal crossings are at a 55-year low, she does discuss videos of ICE tackling a young mother and using tear gas in a Chicago residential neighborhood.

"No. I think they haven't gone far enough," responded Trump.

On June 9, 2026, Congress passed the Secure America Act, granting the Trump administration $70 billion for mass deportations and detention. A year ago was the Big Beautiful Bill Act, which gave $170 billion for his immigration crackdown. There are about 71,000 people

held in ICE custody, with 52 people dying in detention. Some live in fear in the U.S., one of them being 20-year-old Minnesota student Aliah, who still feels the effects of ICE agents flooding the Minneapolis area during Operation Metro Surge.

Los Angeles is one of the cities greatly opposed to Trump's ICE raids. An overwhelmingly Democratic city, Los Angeles is located in California, which, in the last seven presidential elections, voted for the Democratic candidate. The last time its electoral votes went to a Republican was in 1988.

This article will focus on how ICE has impacted Los Angeles, specifically looking at what ICE has conducted in the city and how those actions fostered the perspectives of residents on ICE. Additionally, we will compare Los Angeles' views on ICE to those of other cities and states. After making those comparisons, we will learn about how ICE will influence Democratic Los Angeles.

ICE action in Los Angeles:

During the first week of July, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), which is part of ICE, executed over 20 federal warrants in Los Angeles. They arrested 10 individuals, all accused of sex trafficking. Most of the suspects are members or associates of the Hoover Criminal Gang, a group that has engaged in sex trafficking in Los Angeles' Figueroa Corridor. 51 victims have been identified, some being as young as 14 years old.

But according to John Raphling, associate U.S. program director at Human Rights Watch, ICE raids have been primarily focused on Latino populations. Human Rights Watch's analysis of ICE arrest data found that ICE dramatically increased arrests, primarily of people without violent or even any U.S. criminal history.

Additionally, in the 2025 Berkeley IGS Poll, 69% of California voters disapproved of Trump's immigration enforcement policies. There have been many stories on Los Angeles residents' interactions with ICE officials, and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass has spoken out against ICE. She has even signed an executive directive to support Los Angeles' immigrant communities during the ICE raids.

“We are a proud city of immigrants, and with the Trump Administration signaling that they will ratchet up their chaotic approach, I’m making sure we deploy every resource and tool available within the City to ensure that we are supporting immigrant communities,” said Mayor Bass.

As part of Trump’s immigration policies, ICE has shifted resources from border enforcement to neighborhoods. In the summer of 2025, arrests increased by a factor of seven compared to the same period the previous year. They have swept up immigrants even without criminal convictions in their communities, workplaces, and homes, according to a Capital & Main analysis of data ICE collected for the seven-county region under the jurisdiction of its Los Angeles field office.

Still, there is a portion of the Los Angeles population that is in favor of ICE. Looking back at the 2025 Berkeley IGS Poll, 31% of respondents did not answer disapproving of Trump’s ICE policies. Yet, for the Los Angeles area, the majority of the population is against Trump’s immigration enforcement policies.

Los Angeles’s reaction to ICE in comparison to other cities:

There have been many protests against ICE in Los Angeles. Local activists and family members of undocumented workers showed up at the locations ICE has targeted, confronting agents about the arrests. Some, like Service Employees International Union California President David Huerta, were arrested during these demonstrations.

Los Angeles is not the only city to have sanctuary policies, which provide some local protection for immigrants. States like Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, and Oregon have adopted laws that forbid unconditional compliance with ICE. State courts in Massachusetts and New York have barred local law enforcement from complying with ICE officials.

In a January 2026 Politico poll, nearly half of Americans—49%—disapprove of Trump’s mass deportation campaign. More than 1 in 3 Trump voters say that although they support the goals of his mass deportation campaign, they disapprove of the way he is implementing it. 38%

of Americans said the federal government should prioritize deporting immigrants who have committed serious crimes, while 21% said the Trump administration should only deport serious criminals.

However, there are states that do cooperate with ICE. Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas have enacted laws that require local law enforcement to work with ICE officials. Thus, while some states and Americans that value sanctuary policies are more opposed to ICE, there are some states and Americans that are more aligned with ICE's goals.

Conclusion:

Immigration policies and ICE continue to be a contentious topic in America. While many states and cities have different stances on ICE's efforts, Los Angeles remains one of the places that appears to be heavily opposed to ICE. It is an overwhelmingly Democratic city, with leaders holding Trump and ICE accountable. They have passed legislation that keeps ICE out of schools, hospitals, voting centers, and day cares. They have also empowered law enforcement to investigate ICE killings and mandate ICE agents show their IDs and badges.

It is important to note that the majority of California voters, as indicated by the Berkeley IGS poll, disfavor Trump's immigration policies. With this in mind, it remains probable that Los Angeles will continue to stay opposed toward ICE and be a sanctuary city for immigrants.

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