

## Why Congress Must Change Appropriations to DHS: A Minnesota Perspective

Since 2025, the United States has seen a surge in federal immigration enforcement operations nationwide, pursued at any cost. These operations employ militarized and draconian methods, revise long-standing policies to enable larger and more disruptive raids, reinterpret laws to justify coercive detention, instill fear, and waste billions of taxpayer dollars.

Our home community in Minnesota became the frontline of these harms in late November 2025. Over the weeks that followed, Operation Metro Surge deployed thousands of federal agents to Minnesota. Federal agents swept through neighborhoods, targeting people who looked or sounded like noncitizens. Warrantless stops, arrests, and detentions soon resulted in the detention of U.S. citizens and the shooting of one individual. As Minnesotans exercised their First Amendment rights, federal agents quickly targeted those who opposed immigration enforcement policies, killing Renee Nicole Good on January 7, 2026. DHS next expanded its campaign against refugees under Operation PARRIS (Post-Admission Refugee Reverification and Integrity Strengthening), detaining dozens without legal authority. Less than two weeks later, DHS agents killed another Minnesotan, Alex Pretti. These DHS actions are part of a broader pattern that focuses on the detention and deportation of noncitizens over all other priorities, persecuting residents regardless of immigration status, destabilizing communities, violating our values, and undermining the rule of law.

For too long, DHS has been funded and empowered to do harm. NOW is the time to address the gaps in our laws that have enabled DHS to use taxpayer funds to terrorize our communities. Congress must take action to send a clear message: no more taxpayer funds for operations that violate the law.

### **FLOODING CITIES WITH FEDERAL AGENTS WASTES BILLIONS AND VIOLATES HUMAN RIGHTS**

Starting in November 2025, Minnesota has become the latest city targeted by federal law enforcement. The Trump administration co-opted massive numbers of federal law enforcement agents to engage in immigration enforcement. Using only a portion of the over \$70 billion that was allocated to DHS in the OBBBA (One Big Beautiful Bill Act), the Administration sent an initial 2,000 federal agents to the Twin Cities. What followed has been an escalation of the militarized and harmful tactics seen in L.A., Chicago, Portland and D.C. These indiscriminate and violent tactics ultimately led to the killing of Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti by DHS, the shooting of a noncitizen by a federal agent, the arrest and detention of a small child and his father, and other abuses. The sheer scale of the operation prompted multiple federal judicial orders requiring DHS to respect civil rights.

## TARGETING REFUGEES BETRAYS OUR VALUES AND VIOLATES INTERNATIONAL LAW

On January 9, 2026, DHS announced Operation PARRIS. While DHS attempted to justify this as necessary to identify fraud in refugee cases, the agency used it as license to arrest, detain, and transfer out of Minnesota more than 100 lawful refugees within hours. DHS does not need to discard practices which have been in place for more than 40 years; they can use far less costly, traumatic, and invasive options, such as interviews, to achieve their goal of safeguarding the refugee system. Based on these violations, The Advocates for Human Rights (AHR) joined others in a federal lawsuit challenging the basis of arrests and detentions under Operation PARRIS. A federal judge has agreed with us by issuing an order temporarily restraining the government's actions, but that order is limited to Minnesota. Congress must act to bring DHS in line.

### EXAMPLE

One AHR client is a 16-year-old girl who was arrested by DHS despite holding refugee status. DHS provided mere hours for her to seek assistance before transfer, which meant AHR attorneys had to swiftly file a request for judicial intervention. Agents told the girl that she would be moved to Texas unless her parents came to get her, knowing that her parents were also refugees threatened by this policy.

### EXAMPLE

AHR is aware of multiple individuals who have been arrested and detained under PARRIS and sent to Texas. The individuals were then released by DHS in Texas but were not provided with return transport or identification documents that would allow them to fly or drive home.

### EXAMPLE

As a result of this extremely disruptive policy, AHR has had to act quickly to provide legal counsel to individuals unlawfully arrested and detained within hours, before they are moved to another jurisdiction. Federal judges have agreed with our arguments, ordering DHS to return and release these individuals. However, this policy has greatly increased the workload and stress organizations must manage to ensure the government upholds the law for refugees, diverting capacity from assisting others.

## LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY OR STANDARDS UNDERMINES RIGHTS FOR US ALL

DHS has not only received funding despite these harms, but it also appears to operate with relative impunity. The Trump administration weakened or removed independent oversight mechanisms within DHS, undercutting any effort at accountability. While DOJ may open criminal investigations into DHS activity, their credibility is undermined by repeated statements by the administration exonerating agents in advance of any investigation. The courts are limited in their ability to impose judicial constraints on federal agents given the administration's insistence on challenging all adverse rulings and minimally complying, or sometimes not complying at all, with judicial orders.

The lack of clear standards for DHS further reinforces impunity for agency actors. Unlike federal, state, or local law enforcement, which have clear protocols for conduct, DHS agents operate in an immigration system that does not adequately safeguard Constitutional rights. Criminal law enforcement agents have clear requirements around search and seizure, evidence, use of force, and professionalism. DHS is choosing to ignore those best practices. Indeed, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has established clear standards for anyone in a position of public trust, which DHS does not uphold.

### EXAMPLE

AHR has received reports that people are being held for over 24 hours in the Ft. Snelling building, which is not designed for overnight holds. Detainees have alleged being unable to call attorneys, not receiving blankets or cots, and having no privacy in overcrowded cells. This raises concerns about violations of people's rights, such as lack of medical care, adequate food and hygiene, and access to counsel.

## PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS DO NOT JUSTIFY THESE OPERATIONS

Despite these sweeping and shocking harms, DHS maintains that its efforts are justified because they target the "worst of the worst." However, nearly three-quarters of the people DHS has arrested have *no criminal records*, and fewer than 5% of those arrests are for serious crimes. In fact, recent data show that during 2025, there has been more than a 2,000% (that is not a typo) increase in the detention of people with *no criminal history*.

Conversely, law enforcement agencies have noted that they are being sidelined and are unable to investigate and respond to serious crimes due to these enforcement priorities. Federal partners no longer have the capacity to assist in complex criminal investigations. For instance, shifting DHS Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) resources from trafficking investigations to civil immigration violations disrupts the carefully established relationships between law enforcement and service

providers that foster victim reporting, weakening coordinated response efforts. Forcing MN law enforcement to respond to calls to keep the peace or assist after killings by DHS diverts personnel and capacity away from investigating serious crimes. Additionally, these efforts erode trust, making it more difficult for law enforcement to retain witnesses and less likely that neighbors will call or help the police, among other consequences.

We are suffering serious and lasting harm. People are afraid to send their kids to school, which is no longer a safe space free from militarized officers. People are also afraid to attend religious activities because there has been no guarantee that officers will not enter places of worship. Community members prefer to stay sick rather than risk going to hospitals, and doctors are now finding themselves forced to confront officers pursuing their patients. The presence of masked, armed officers in public spaces fosters a climate of fear, control, and government intimidation similar to many dictatorships we often condemn.

#### EXAMPLE

The influx of agents and their aggressive tactics make everyone a target, an approach which reduces public safety. For example, AHR has represented several farm workers who served as witnesses in cases that brought abusive employers to justice, including for felony wage theft. Although recognized by DHS HSI as a victim-witness of human trafficking, one of our clients fears leaving his home because of the ICE presence and the tactics they use. The fact that even someone cooperating with law enforcement might be detained or deported sends a message to future witnesses and victims that they won't be protected by law enforcement if they try to report crimes.

## WHY IT MATTERS

As experts on international human rights and the rule of law worldwide, The Advocates is concerned about what we are witnessing in Minnesota. We are seeing how unchecked immigration enforcement can cause physical harm, psychological trauma, and destabilize families and communities—serious consequences that arise when fundamental rights and legal safeguards are disregarded. We also know that tactics that erode human rights or undermine the standards of the rule of law destabilize democratic systems and values.

If left unchecked—or expanded through budget appropriations and rhetoric—DHS's use of force will not only harm those being arrested, forced into crowded detention centers, relocated without notice to family or counsel, and facing deportation to places where they will be persecuted. DHS's actions also put strain on the legal systems and the communities that must mobilize to try to mitigate those harms. Vague and unproven concerns about national security and public safety cannot justify disregarding human rights and the rule of law, which exist to prevent this kind of overreach. Continuing to fund this agency sets a dangerous precedent.

## TAKE ACTION

- ✓ **Congress must ensure any further funding for DHS or DOJ includes requirements to protect civil liberties and human rights.** This includes conditioning further funding on:

  1. Removing all DHS agents from our communities and clarifying that DHS's mandate must conform to the Constitution and adhere to the rule of law.
  2. Requiring the immediate end to Operation PARRIS and requiring DHS to restore the rights of those impacted.
  3. Re-establishing and funding civil rights offices and ombudspersons within DHS and DOJ and ensuring independent investigations when agents break the law.
  4. Requiring any agents undertaking immigration enforcement to unmask and wear identifying name badges, which ensures accountability.
  5. Requiring judicial warrants for any arrests or detention.
  6. Stopping immigration enforcement based on racial profiling (end Kavanaugh stops).
  7. Requiring use-of-force protocols, with training and independent accountability mechanisms for noncompliance.
  8. Codifying sensitive locations policies that prohibit immigration enforcement at places like schools, hospitals, courthouses, and places of worship.
  9. Requiring all DHS detention systems uphold the Mandela Standards that create minimum conditions of detention, including adequate and appropriate nutrition, religious accommodations, privacy, sanitation, medical care, mental health support, communication with family and counsel, and safety.
  10. Ensuring all DHS detainees have access to counsel, including the ability to contact existing counsel or to contact a DOJ-listed free legal services provider before an individual can be transferred by DHS.
  11. Making clear that DHS's interpretations of the law do not conform with Congressional intent or the needs of American taxpayers. Specifically, ensure that no funds made available to DHS in this Act or any other Act may be used to engage in civil immigration enforcement activities in the interior of the United States (defined as more than 50 miles from a land or sea border).
  12. Stopping family detention and halting any new contracts for private detention.
  13. Ending the expansion of harmful 287(g) agreements.
  14. Repealing the Alien Enemies Act or withholding funds for its use.
- ✓ **Congress should demand information from DHS and DOJ, including:**

  1. Funds spent to date on Operation Metro Surge, including how funds have been used;
  2. Funds spent per person targeted by Operation PARRIS to arrest, detain, transfer, case review, respond to habeas litigation resulting from these actions, and return individuals ordered released/returned; and
  3. Internal memoranda regarding tactics for any such operations, including training provided and clarifications around use of force, masking, due process, and civil liberties.
- ✓ **Congress must pass the Bivens Act, TRACK ICE Act, No Anonymity in Immigration Enforcement Act, No Secret Police Act, Enact the Qualified Immunity Abolition Act of 2026, and S. 2212 to create accountability mechanisms and standards that bring DHS policing in line with other agencies exercising public trust functions.**
- ✓ **Congress should pass the Real Courts, Rule of Law Act to ensure anyone appearing for immigration proceedings receives a fair, independent trial.**