Buoyed by bipartisan support, corporate profits and immigrant prisons soar in US Midwest

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The second Trump administration has rapidly escalated the bipartisan assault on immigrant workers and their families, massively expanding the machinery of detention and deportation.

This offensive, built upon a foundation of joint Democratic and Republican Party anti-immigrant policies, aims to divide the working class and scapegoat immigrants for the systemic crises of capitalism. It is also generating immense profits for private prison corporations like the GEO Group and CoreCivic.

Trump's immigrant gulag and the drive to a police state

The Trump administration's program of mass detentions is the spearhead of a drive to establish a police state in the US, targeting the democratic rights of the entire working class. Trump has continued Biden's policy of integrating the private prison industry into deportation operations, granting massive contracts to the GEO Group and CoreCivic.

The administration's goal of deporting 1 million people annually and directives for ICE to arrest 1,200 to 1,500 daily transform human beings into quotas, fueling the demand for detention beds. Acting ICE Director Todd Lyons has outrageously called for a deportation process "like [Amazon] Prime, but with human beings."

Seeking to expand ICE's detention capacity by 100,000 beds, the agency is inviting bids on government contracts worth up to $45 billion. Shuttered facilities, many with histories of abuse and safety violations, are being reopened across at least five states, including the North Lake Correctional Facility (NLCF) in Michigan, FCI Dublin in California and Delaney Hall in New Jersey.

There are plans for a "deportation hub" at Fort Bliss, Texas, capable of holding 10,000 people and a proposal to use Guantánamo Bay. This rapid profit-driven expansion inevitably leads to catastrophic overcrowding and deteriorating conditions. Within three weeks of Trump's second term, ICE facilities were at 109 percent capacity.

North Lake and Lake County: A history of abuse and exploitation

The reopening of the prison facilities, such as the North Lake Correctional Facility (NLCF) in Michigan, exemplifies this profit-driven inhumanity. The site, located in impoverished Lake County, far from legal aid and notorious for abuse, will house 1,800 and serve as the hub for immigrant detention in the Midwest.

The "immediate activation" of the 1,800-bed NLCF is expected to generate over $70 million annually for GEO, formerly known as Wackenhut Corrections Corporation, a name infamous worldwide for a litany of abuses against prisoners and workers.

NLCF has a grim history. Originally a prison for juveniles, its state contract was pulled in 2005 due to neglect. In 2020, immigrant detainees staged hunger strikes protesting denial of mail, lack of meals prepared according to religious guidelines, retaliation and dangerous COVID-19 conditions. An outbreak infected dozens and led to at least one death. Allegations of sexual abuse also plague the facility, with a former case manager sentenced in 2024 for sexual acts with an inmate.

This pattern of abuse is systemic across GEO Group's empire, with facilities worldwide plagued by similar allegations. The company has even retaliated against detainees protesting slave-labor wages of $1 a day for the performance of essential functions like cleaning, food prep and laundry. An NLRB (National Labor Relations Board) complaint filed early in January 2025 alleges protesters in a Mesa Verde, California, facility were placed in solitary confinement as retaliation for organizing a work stoppage against such super-exploitation.

Lake County, one of Michigan's poorest, has a poverty rate of 21.2 percent and an unemployment rate of 8.5 percent as of March 2025, numbers which greatly underestimate the true level of poverty. The promise of 300 prison jobs is an economic mirage. Such jobs are mostly low-wage with high turnover, and prisons rarely foster genuine local development, instead trapping communities in dependence on the commodification of suffering.

As J.R. Martin of No Detention Centers in Michigan stated, the GEO Group wants to "exploit the suffering of immigrants and the poverty of Lake County to make money."

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GEO Group: Super-profits from human misery

The GEO Group (GEO), the largest prison operator in the United States, largest private ICE contractor and operator of facilities in Australia, South Africa and the UK, stands as a prime beneficiary of the construction of a police state.

The 15-year contract for its 1,000-bed Delaney Hall facility in New Jersey is projected at over $60 million annually. GEO's stock soared post-election, with Executive Chairman George Zoley declaring it an "unprecedented opportunity," potentially worth $800 million to $1 billion in incremental annualized revenue.

The company invested $70 million in December 2024 to expand its capacity for ICE even before major contracts were finalized. Profitable suffering attracts the heights of finance capital: GEO's largest shareholders include investment fund giants BlackRock, Vanguard and Goldman Sachs.

This bonanza is facilitated by lobbying and campaign contributions, including $1.38 million by GEO in 2024 and $500,000 to Trump's 2025 inaugural committee from both GEO and CoreCivic.

In late February 2024, GEO's PAC (political action committee) became the first in the nation to max out donations to Trump's campaign. The revolving door between state and business further cements this collusion: former top ICE official Daniel A. Bible joined GEO as an Executive Vice President just before the 2024 election. Other ex-ICE officials like David Venturella, Daniel Ragsdale and Matthew Albence also moved to GEO.

The complicity of the Democrats

This assault is not the policy of one party or simply Trump but reflects unified ruling class interests. The Biden administration presided over a significant expansion of ICE detention. The average daily detainee population surged from 14,195 in January 2021 to 39,703 by January 2025.

Under Biden, 90 percent of ICE detainees were held in privately run facilities, a 10 percent increase from the first Trump administration. At least 23 people died in ICE custody during the Biden administration, and punitive use of solitary confinement increased by 50 percent for vulnerable populations.

A 2024 study by the ACLU examined deaths from 2017 through 2021 and found that 95 percent of deaths while in ICE custody—49 out of 52—could have been prevented with proper medical care. The Biden administration renewed private prison contracts and opened new mega-facilities like Moshannon Valley, Pennsylvania. His DOJ even joined the GEO Group and CoreCivic in challenging a New Jersey law aimed at banning private immigration detention.

In Michigan, Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer, often mentioned as a presidential contender for 2028, has been notably silent on the NLCF reopening. This coincides with her recent appearances with Trump, praising his administration for federal military investments in Michigan, embracing the would-be fascist dictator in the name of pragmatism. At the White House, Whitmer shamefully stood by while Trump, the man who incited his followers to kidnap and murder her, signed executive orders persecuting political opponents.

This disgusting appearance in the Oval Office followed a morning speech in support of Trump's tariffs. Whitmer's alignment with Trump underscores the Democratic Party's complicity in the broader anti-immigrant agenda and the drive towards militarism and police terror.

For a socialist struggle against the detention gulag!

The for-profit caging of human beings is an abomination, an inevitable product of a capitalist system that commodifies all aspects of life. The bipartisan assault on immigrants serves to divide the working class, scapegoating a vulnerable population for the failures of capitalism.

The working class must come forward to defend immigrants, halt the destruction of democratic rights, and demand the dismantling of the prison gulag and the entire deportation machine. This requires an independent political struggle against both the Democrats and Republicans, parties irredeemably tied to the interests of the corporate-financial oligarchy.

The only social force that can address the root causes of poverty, war, forced migration and end the barbarism of for-profit incarceration is the international working class, united in a fight for world socialism.

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