

California Democrats’ “school alert” bill entrenches Trump’s authoritarian deportation framework

Marc Wells**5 September 2025**

The California state legislature has passed a bill (SB 98) requiring schools and universities to prepare plans to notify parents, students and faculty whenever federal immigration enforcement agents appear on campus. If signed by Governor Gavin Newsom by October 12, the legislation would remain in effect until 2031.

The bill would require California K-12 schools, community colleges and state universities to send immediate notification to all pupils, parents, guardians, teachers, staff, and relevant community members if immigration enforcement officers are present or confirmed at a school or campus.

Notifications would include details such as the date, time, and location of the confirmed enforcement activity, along with links to additional resources, ensuring privacy and excluding any personally identifiable information.

The alleged intent is to prevent panic and maintain a sense of safety and security for all students, particularly those from immigrant families, by providing timely and transparent communication.

The claims of “protections” offered by SB 98 are entirely cynical. The notifications required by the bill are to be sent after immigration enforcement is already present on campus. They do not provide advance warning or prevent raids from occurring, leaving students and families to react in real time to armed federal agents.

In practice, the legislation shifts responsibility onto the working-class victims themselves, forcing parents, students, and faculty to scramble for safety while the state takes no meaningful action to halt the raids.

Democratic officials present the legislation as a humane defense of immigrant families. In reality, it is a reactionary maneuver designed to pacify social opposition while it normalizes immigration raids and channels growing anger over Trump’s escalating mass deportation campaign into controlled and politically harmless outlets.

The measure emerges amid unprecedented ICE operations

across California, including heavily militarized raids in Los Angeles and arrests at schools over the summer. According to official estimates, the Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation’s second largest, serves more than 30,000 immigrant students, roughly one-quarter of whom are undocumented. Entire communities now live under constant fear of separation, abuses, detention and deportation.

State Senator Sasha Renee Perez, who authored the bill, admitted: “The presence of immigration enforcement officers can have detrimental effects on students—especially those who may be undocumented or otherwise without permanent status.”

Yet Perez and her colleagues do nothing to challenge these raids or stop ICE operations altogether. Their warnings serve only to deflect responsibility while maintaining full collaboration with federal authorities.

Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi, a Democrat from Torrance, declared: “Students cannot learn unless they feel safe. For decades we had a bipartisan agreement to keep educational institutions, schools, campuses, free from immigration enforcement activities.”

Muratsuchi’s statement exposes the true character of the legislation. Far from confronting the assault on immigrant families, Sacramento is codifying a new status quo: campuses are no longer safe zones. Federal raids are now treated as inevitable, and the state’s role is reduced to issuing text messages and emails warning students and their families to prepare for the arrival of armed federal agents.

At Los Angeles Unified, school officials have pleaded with immigration authorities not to conduct raids during school hours, a request that underscores the Democrats’ political cowardice. Esther Mejia, executive officer of the UC Student Association, said: “We all deserve the opportunity to pursue our education free from fear, terror and intimidation.”

The reality is precisely the opposite. This legislation accepts and normalizes a future in which armed federal

agents roam school campuses. Meanwhile, families are warned to “seek safety” and immigrant students grow up in a constant state of surveillance and terror.

Far from being a “safe haven,” California is actively integrating state and federal agencies as well as educational institutions into a unified repressive framework.

Governor Newsom, in particular, plays a two-faced role. While Democrats posture as defenders of immigrant rights, Newsom has expanded funding for border militarization, surveillance infrastructure and police deployments, including the California Highway Patrol (CHP), which he has recently placed at the center of two major new state enforcement regimes:

- A statewide “crime suppression” expansion, authorizing CHP to intervene aggressively in working-class neighborhoods under the pretext of combating “organized crime.”

- A “homeless encampment clearance” task force, in which CHP officers coordinate with local police to forcibly evict unhoused residents—often immigrants and low-wage workers—from public spaces.

The bill, moreover, cannot be understood outside the broader context of the ongoing coup underway in Washington, D.C., where President Donald Trump is consolidating authoritarian power and expanding federal repression across the country.

Through this coup, the state apparatus, including ICE, the Department of Homeland Security and militarized federal police forces, are being wielded to suppress political opposition and terrorize immigrant communities.

From Washington, the Trump administration is extending its operations into Chicago, Los Angeles, and other major urban centers, integrating immigration raids along with “crime suppression” offensives and mass police deployments under the pretext of “restoring law and order.”

Trump has announced plans to deport millions of immigrants through sweeping military-style operations, mobilizing federal and local forces as well as private contractors. These plans are already being tested in California, where ICE raids have increased in scope and coordination.

A group of 115 House Democrats, called The New Democrat Coalition’s Immigration and Border Security Task Force, issued a recent immigration reform proposal exemplifying the Democrats’ role in advancing repressive, bipartisan immigration policies.

The plan, introduced by Arizona Representative Greg Stanton and California Representative Salud Carbajal, seeks to significantly bolster border enforcement by increasing the number of Border Patrol agents and Customs and Border Protection officers, and implementing advanced surveillance

technologies.

While it proposes pathways to legal status for certain undocumented immigrants, such as Dreamers and Temporary Protected Status holders, it imposes stringent conditions, including fines and background checks, that effectively criminalize the undocumented population. The Democrats’ framework mirrors the Trump administration’s approach, institutionalizing a system of repression and underscoring their complicity.

The Democrats’ role must also be viewed in relation to their broader political adaptation to the far right. The ongoing “gerrymandering wars” in California, Texas and across the country demonstrate that the Democrats are not fighting Trump’s authoritarian agenda but are active participants in the breakdown of American democracy.

Both parties are engaged in an undemocratic struggle to redraw electoral maps to manipulate districts and maintain capitalist political dominance amid growing social unrest. The product of these reactionary maneuvers is a deepening disenfranchisement of the working class, particularly immigrants, as well as students and low-income communities.

The Democrats’ campus alert bill exposes a fundamental reality: neither Democratic nor Republican parties can defend immigrants, students, or democratic rights. The bipartisan assault—from Trump’s ongoing coup and mass deportations to Newsom’s CHP-led repression—reflects a unified strategy to protect ruling-class interests.

The attacks on immigrant students and families are the first stage of a broader offensive against the entire working class, targeting all workers regardless of status. Raids, mass detentions and militarized policing are being tested on the most vulnerable as a template for repressing resistance to inequality, exploitation, dictatorship and war.

To resist, the working class must act independently, breaking from both capitalist parties and the trade union bureaucracy in a struggle for international socialism. Attacks on immigrants in California are linked to authoritarianism, genocide, imperialist war and social counterrevolution worldwide. Only through the international unification of the working class and the overthrow of capitalism—a system of oppression, dictatorship, and war—can true equality, freedom, and democratic rights be secured.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact