

As Democrats conspire with Republicans to give immigration police free rein

## Armed ICE officers remain at airports

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3 April 2026

On Wednesday, House and Senate Republicans announced an agreement on legislation to reopen the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with the exception of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Border Patrol, a component of Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Senate Majority Leader John Thune and House Speaker Mike Johnson said passage of the bill to partially reopen DHS, passed by the Senate on a unanimous voice vote on March 27, would be followed by a measure to resume funding of ICE and the Border Patrol by means of the budget reconciliation process. That legislative path bypasses the Senate filibuster rule, which requires 60 votes to pass a bill. As a result, Senate Republicans, who narrowly control the upper chamber, could pass a bill to resume funding of ICE and the Border Patrol by a simple majority, even if all Senate Democrats voted against it.

On March 27, following the bipartisan Senate vote, Johnson denounced the Senate measure and refused to bring it to a vote in the House. Both chambers then went on a two-week recess, with Congress scheduled to return on Monday, April 13.

But on April 1, President Trump posted a tweet on his Truth Social platform demanding that by June 1 Republicans deliver for his signature a bill to fund ICE and the Border Patrol, using the budget reconciliation process. A senior White House official said Trump would sign a separate bipartisan bill to fund the rest of DHS.

The political import of these maneuvers is that Congress will resume funding of Trump's immigration storm troopers without any limitations on their police state methods. Despite their rhetorical calls for "reform" of ICE and CBP and their proposals for token restraints, the Democrats are fully and knowingly complicit in this conspiracy against the democratic rights of the American people.

Their pretense of outrage and horror over the murders of US citizens Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti by ICE and Border Patrol killers in Minneapolis is exposed as a fraud. Their only concern from the outset was to contain and dissipate the eruption of popular hatred for Trump's immigration Gestapo and sympathy with immigrants and ensure the continued operations of the federal immigration police.

The Democrats paved the way for giving ICE and the Border Patrol free rein by voting unanimously for the March 27 Senate measure to partially fund DHS while dropping earlier demands that any such bill include certain limited restraints, such as requiring officers to remove masks, identify themselves, and obtain judicial warrants before entering homes or businesses.

Hailing the March 27 Senate bill as a "victory" and concealing its real significance, Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said, "This agreement funds TSA, the Coast Guard, FEMA, CISA, strengthens security at the border and ports of entry, and keeps America safe."

Not one Democratic office-holder denounced this exercise in cynicism and duplicity, including Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. They are all complicit.

The immediate pretext for passing the March 27 Senate bill was the chaos at US airports caused by the shutdown of DHS, which led to Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers going without pay for nearly a month. Thousands of TSA officers called in sick and hundreds resigned, resulting in long lines and flight delays.

Trump exploited this situation to deploy dozens of armed ICE officers at airports across the country, supposedly to ease the crisis. This was a ruse. As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote:

It is, rather, a further step in normalizing the use of armed federal agents and the military in civilian settings to intimidate and terrorize the population. It is a core element in the drive by Trump, and the corporate oligarchy that he represents, to dictatorship.

ICE at the airports is particularly sinister. It will be used to block not only immigrants from leaving the country but also political opponents of the government. It is the physical prefiguration of a police state.

Naureen Shah, the director of policy and government affairs for immigration at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), said of the ICE presence at airports:

Never in our history has a president deployed armed agents to the airport to inspire fear among families. The American people don't want to live in White House adviser Stephen Miller's dystopian police state.

The ACLU warned that TSA has begun sharing traveler lists with ICE, "breaking from TSA's past practice." It advised citizens without legal status to "consider the risks of flying, including on domestic flights within the US."

The National Immigration Law Center on March 26 issued an updated alert titled "Community Alert: Immigration Arrests at Airports." It stated that the TSA was "giving passenger information to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)." The alert continued: "This means people who don't have legal immigration status or whose status is uncertain could be arrested or deported when they go through airport security in the United States." Since being deployed, ICE has carried out immigration arrests inside airport terminals.

On March 27, President Trump ordered DHS to begin paying TSA officers, who began receiving back pay on Monday, March 30. By mid-week, the airports were back to normal, as TSA sickouts sharply declined. But Trump's border czar Tom Homan and DHS officials have refused to say when, or if, the ICE officers will be withdrawn.

In interviews on CBS and CNN over the March 28-29 weekend, Homan said ICE would "maintain a presence" at airports and that agents would stay "until the airports

feel like they're 100 percent" and back to "normal operations." He added that "if less agents come back, that means we'll keep more ICE agents there." Asked if ICE would leave once the TSA is consistently staffed, Homan said, "We'll see."

In the face of this indefinite deployment of ICE goons at US airports, not a single Democratic speaker at the March 28 "No Kings" demonstrations, which brought out over 8 million people, called for their removal. That includes, once again, Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez, not to mention Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic Socialists of America/Democratic mayor of New York, with two of the country's busiest airports, Kennedy and LaGuardia.

Since then, only one Democratic lawmaker, Representative Shontel Brown of Ohio, has explicitly demanded the removal of ICE officers. In an April 3 press release, Brown called for ICE to leave Cleveland Hopkins International Airport.

This virtual silence is not accidental. The Democratic think tank Third Way issued an internal memo warning that "the slogan (abolish ICE) is simple, but politically it is lethal." Senator Ruben Gallego of Arizona said, "The last thing we need to do, again, is to make the same mistake when it comes to 'Defund the Police' rhetoric... People want a slimmed-down ICE that is truly focused on security." Representative Henry Cuellar of Texas said, "Abolishing ICE is not a good message for Democrats."

In fact, the entire system of persecution and mass deportation of immigrants is bipartisan, developed by Democratic as well as Republican administrations, including those of Clinton, Obama and Biden.



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