

How the Democrats enabled the allocation of an extra \$70 billion for Trump's immigration Gestapo

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Early Friday morning, the US Senate passed the Secure America Act, a nearly \$70 billion funding package for the Department of Homeland Security, providing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) with funding through 2029, the end of Trump's second term.

The bill passed 52-47. Every Democrat present voted "no," joined by Republican Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, while Democratic Senator Michael Bennet of Colorado missed the vote. The measure now heads to the House, where Republicans are expected to pass it.

The bill provides billions for hiring, training, paying and equipping additional immigration agents and support personnel, expanding detention capacity and building out the technological infrastructure of the police state. One section appropriates \$3.45 billion for "new nonintrusive inspection equipment," "artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other innovative technologies," border surveillance systems and the biometric entry-exit system.

This comes on top of the roughly \$170 billion provided last year for the immigration Gestapo under Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill" Act, which included \$45 billion to construct new detention camps across the United States.

The passage of the bill is not simply a victory handed to Trump by the Republicans. It is the outcome of a political process in which every institution of the existing order, above all the Democratic Party, played its assigned role in strangling the mass movement that erupted in January following the murders of Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis.

It is necessary to review the developments of the past five months. On January 23, 100,000 people rallied in Minneapolis to demand justice for Good and the abolition of ICE. The next day, Trump's immigration Gestapo, then led in Minnesota by longtime Border Patrol thug Gregory Bovino, murdered Alex Pretti, an intensive care unit nurse at the Minneapolis VA hospital.

The murder of Pretti deepened popular anger. Calls for a general strike grew. Protests spread throughout the country. Workers and youth drew the conclusion that the immigration police had to be abolished, not "reformed."

Prior to the killings of Good and Pretti, the Democrats were prepared to fund DHS, including ICE and CBP, without any restrictions. But terrified by the eruption from below, they moved to contain and demobilize the opposition.

Vice President JD Vance flew to Minnesota after Pretti's murder and effectively handed the Democrats the job of smothering the movement. Governor Tim Walz responded by deploying state police against protesters and the National Guard outside the Whipple Federal Building, not to protect immigrants, but to protect ICE.

Trump recalled Bovino and sent "border czar" Tom Homan to Minnesota. Shortly afterward, Homan announced that the Democrats had agreed to provide federal agents with expanded access to jails throughout the state to seize immigrants.

At the same time, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer was working with Trump and the Republicans to pass government funding bills. Under conditions of mass outrage, the Democrats proposed splitting DHS funding off from the rest of the bill, allowing them to posture as opponents of ICE while ensuring that the rest of the government, including the military and the core functions of the capitalist state, remained fully funded.

As the *New York Times* reported, Schumer told Trump that "the American people hate what is going on in the streets," warning that the killings were damaging the administration's credibility. Schumer later declared that "the killing of Mr. Pretti had stiffened their spines" and that Democrats would use spending as one of their "leverage points."

What did this "leverage" amount to? It was a maneuver to demobilize popular opposition and then allow Republicans to use a budget reconciliation bill to pass the money with a

simple majority.

The Trump administration used the Democrats' partial DHS maneuver to flood airports with ICE agents, presenting this as necessary because Transportation Security Administration funding, including pay for air traffic controllers, had also been left in limbo. Democrats initially demanded that ICE be removed from airports, then quickly dropped the demand.

In March, Senate Democrats voted to fund the rest of DHS, excluding ICE and Border Patrol, without securing any restrictions on the immigration police. This was followed, as they knew it would be, with the passage of ICE and CBP funding through the reconciliation process.

Meanwhile, Democratic governors and mayors continue to deploy police against anti-ICE protesters. In New Jersey, where protests now continue inside and outside the for-profit Delaney Hall detention center, Governor Mikie Sherrill has deployed state police to attack protesters and journalists. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka imposed a curfew around the facility, leading to mass arrests.

Across the country, ICE and CBP continue to kidnap workers from their homes, job sites and communities. In South Carolina, 48 workers were taken by ICE while on the job at Burnstein von Seelen, a metal casting business.

The trade union apparatus and the pseudo-left organizations around the Democratic Party have played their role in this process. During the Minneapolis protests, the trade union bureaucracy told workers to remain on the job and respect "no strike" clauses negotiated by the union bureaucracies themselves. The pseudo-left, including the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) as well as groups like *Left Voice*, worked to contain opposition and promote the fiction that the agreement between Trump and the Democrats represented a fundamental retreat.

"Abolish ICE," once promoted by DSA figures such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, has become forbidden language within the Democratic Party, just as "abolish the police" was buried after the mass protests following the murder of George Floyd. Ocasio-Cortez has not issued a statement concerning the DHS funding bill or the continuing crimes of ICE, though she has found time to post repeatedly about the New York Knicks. Bernie Sanders has likewise refused to comment on the funding and ongoing operations of the immigration Gestapo.

Their silence expresses the political reality that the Democrats are collaborators in Trump's police state agenda. The Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence agencies, is terrified above all of a growth of opposition to Trump from below.

This is a critical experience for workers and youth. The conclusion that must be drawn is that the defense of

democratic rights is a class question. It cannot be waged through either capitalist party, the union apparatus or the pseudo-left organizations attached to them. The entire state apparatus, including ICE, CBP, DHS, the police and the military, exists to defend the wealth and power of the oligarchy.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the abolition of ICE, CBP and every police agency; the closure of all detention camps; and the immediate freeing of all detainees. The defense of the most vulnerable immigrant worker is the defense of the democratic rights of the entire working class.

This requires the building of rank-and-file committees in every workplace, school and neighborhood, independent of the union bureaucracy and both capitalist parties, and linked internationally through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Around the world, capitalist governments are using the same anti-immigrant propaganda advanced by the Trump administration to attack refugees, migrants and the democratic rights of the entire working class.

Workers in every industry, from auto parts workers at Nexteer and American Axle, to meat packers in Colorado, confront the same class enemy: the corporations and financial oligarchy that seek to divide workers by nationality, immigration status and race.

This is not only a fight against a criminal government. It is a fight against the capitalist order and the financial oligarchy behind it. Dictatorship and war are the international response of the ruling class to the intensifying crisis of the world capitalist system, centered in the United States. The answer is the independent political mobilization of the working class on a socialist program and the building of the Socialist Equality Party as its leadership.



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