

PROTECT OUR COURTS ACT

Ensuring that ALL New Yorkers can access our courts without fear of being arrested by ICE.

Prosecutors from around the country--including in New York, Massachusetts, Colorado, and California--have condemned ICE courthouse operations.

Albany DA David Soares

"Courthouses should be safe spaces for everyone. Prosecutors, advocates and police have spent decades researching and applying best practices in an effort to encourage the reporting of violent crimes, including sexual assaults and domestic violence crimes. Demagoguery of the issue has caused fear and concern in many citizens and has led to decreased reporting. **The activities of Immigration and Customs Enforcement is compromising our ability to hold accountable perpetrators who prey upon victims from vulnerable immigrant communities.**"

Bronx DA Darcel D. Clark

"I endorse the Protect Our Courts Act because, as the Bronx District Attorney, I encourage people to report crimes... If a victim or witness who is essential to the prosecution of a heinous case is arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement when he or she shows up at the courthouse, we cannot go forward with the case, resulting in cases being dismissed and dangerous individuals being released back into the community. **This could have a chilling effect on getting witnesses to assist in our cases, potentially resulting in a threat to public safety.**"

Brooklyn DA Eric Gonzalez

"**These actions jeopardize public safety by instilling fear in immigrant communities, which makes victims and witnesses afraid to come forward to report crimes, and unable to get justice.** Keeping Brooklyn safe and strengthening community trust in law enforcement are my top priorities as Brooklyn DA, and ICE's actions undermine those important goals. I support the efforts to end this misguided practice."

Manhattan DA Cyrus Vance, Jr.

"**Deporting New Yorkers who show up to court is antithetical to our values and detrimental to our public safety.** The fear of unjust deportation stops crime victims from coming forward, and stops defendants from responsibly attending their court dates. I thank Assembly Member Solages for her work on this bill and urge the legislature to pass it immediately, because all New Yorkers have the right to safely access our courts, whether they are documented or undocumented under federal law."

Joint Statement of 12 California District Attorneys

"ICE courthouse arrests make all Californians less safe. These practices deter residents concerned about their immigration status from appearing in court including as crime victims and witnesses--jeopardizing effective prosecution of criminals who may then re-offend... No one should fear that their immigration status prevents them from seeking justice, whether as a crime victim or otherwise. **ICE's practice is antithetical to a fair system of justice that must protect all of us.**"

Joint Statement of Denver DA, City Attorney, and Other Elected Officials

"We believe this practice has and will increasingly lead to an environment of fear for victims and witnesses. **Already, we have victims of domestic violence refusing to come to court for fear of immigration consequences** which results in violent criminal being released into the community. Unless ICE has a criminal warrant, we respectfully request you consider courthouses sensitive locations..."

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Maine Attorney General Janet T. Mills

"In investigating matters of human trafficking, domestic violence and the like, it is critical to us that all individuals have free and open access to Maine courts, regardless of their immigration status. The recent action of ICE Agents at the Cumberland County Courthouse will have an unnecessary chilling effect on our efforts to obtain the cooperation of victims and our successful prosecution of crimes."

Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh

"[M]y first priority is the safety of Marylanders who turn to the courts for protection against domestic violence and other crimes...I am concerned that the Administration's aggressive new policies will discourage the most vulnerable immigrants from seeking judicial protection...I seek the Department of Homeland Security's commitment that it will take steps that ensure that Maryland's courthouses remain open to all victims of crime and violence[.]"

Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey

"We've already seen reports that sexual assault and domestic violence reporting are down. This is why we think the Trump administration's approach is ultimately ineffective, because it undercuts local law enforcement's ability to develop the critical trust needed to keep communities safe."

Middlesex County DA Marian T. Ryan (Massachusetts)

"I am deeply concerned that the prospect of ICE conducting civil arrests in courthouses across the Commonwealth will have a hugely detrimental effect on law enforcement and on the ability of prosecutors to seek justice on behalf of the Commonwealth...Justice is harmed when victims and witnesses, who are essential to our prosecutions, are afraid to even set foot in a courthouse because of the possibility of facing arrest for civil immigration infractions."

Essex County DA Jonathan W. Blodgett (Massachusetts)

"Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests at courthouses in our county have impacted witnesses appearing for trial, victims of crime (especially those of domestic violence), and criminal defendants we are seeking to prosecute. This practice often impedes access to justice for victims as well as our ability to prosecute cases, including, most recently, a defendant set to be tried for multiple counts of aggravated rape of a child."

Kings County DA Dan Satterberg (Washington)

"... ICE actions are undermining trust in the neutrality of the court system, where 'justice for all' has been our hallmark. We are not safer when victims of crime fear being deported if they call 911, talk to police, or come to the house to get protection. We are not safer when a victim of abuse thinks she must choose between deportation or suffering more violence at the hands of her abuser. Unpunished violent crime threatens us all."