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Trump 2.0 Poses an Even Bigger Threat to Migrants, See Massive Expansion of ICE's Surveillance, Here's How We Fight Back!

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11/10 Trump 2.0 Poses an Even Bigger Threat to Migrants. Here's How We Fight Back

Let's take concrete action to protect the millions of US residents facing the threat of Trump's deportation crosshairs.

Silky Shah - Truthout

This election cycle was defined — yet again — by Donald Trump's fearmongering over immigration. Like his previous two campaigns for president, Trump fueled a racist panic over "migrant crime" and capitalized on people's fears over economic insecurity by scapegoating immigrants for all of the U.S.'s problems, including but not limited to the housing crisis, opioid crisis and inflation. But unlike those previous elections, rather than challenging Trump's rhetoric, the Democrats capitulated to the Republicans and solidified the rightward lurch on the issue.

Throughout her campaign, Kamala Harris repeatedly lambasted Trump for "talking a big game about securing our border" but still tanking what she referred to as "the most significant border security bill in decades." The bipartisan Senate bill, also known as the Border Act of 2024, would have drastically gutted asylum; closed the border to people seeking safety; increased funding for immigration detention and surveillance, including the largest appropriation for custody operations in Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) history; and even included money to complete the border wall. The few positive reforms in the bill — such as a modest increase in visas and some expanded protections for certain immigrant youth and Afghan evacuees — were crumbs amid the harsh measures that reinforced the harmful ideology that immigrants are a "security threat." Harris often emphasized the significance of Republican support for the bill and boasted that "even the Border Patrol endorsed it." It was a stark contrast to her Democratic primary campaign four years earlier when she supported the decriminalization of people crossing the border and declared, "Trump's border wall is a complete waste of taxpayer money and won't make us any safer."

As we take stock of the politics of immigration in the U.S. after this election, including the anti-immigrant rhetoric spewed along the campaign trail, the unwillingness of the Democratic Party to provide a countervailing vision on immigration is indefensible. This moral failure robbed immigrants of their humanity and turned them into spectacles of false narratives around “public safety” and “national security.” The Democrats need to be forced to reckon with their record: Decrying Trump’s white supremacist agenda while championing one of its biggest components was never going to square with the voters they needed.

As we await the onslaught we know is coming under another Trump administration, it is imperative that we challenge these dehumanizing narratives and uplift immigrants as valuable members of our families, schools and workplaces that are worthy of dignity and support. Sadly, the Democratic Party’s strategy this election cycle will make it that much harder for us to make the case.

If the border wall symbolized Trump’s first run for president, this one was defined by the call for mass deportations. While both parties have aligned around border policy, the starkest contrast between the two is the approach to immigrants currently living in the U.S. Prior to Trump taking office in 2017, the immigrant rights movement fought back against mass deportations under Barack Obama labeling him “deporter-in-chief.” Some 400,000 immigrants were formally deported each year, meaning they were subject to a five-year bar to reenter the country and could face lengthy prison sentences if they attempted to do so. The growing outrage over mass deportations led some members of his own party, especially at the local and state level, to pass robust sanctuary laws to prevent collaborations between ICE and local police.

At the federal level, Obama was compelled to expand protections to broad categories of immigrants through programs such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status, which allow them to live and work in the U.S. without fear of deportation. Because of these efforts and the shifted focus on the border, rampant deportations of community members have gone down considerably. In 2023 there were roughly 140,000 formal deportations.

But with Trump’s return, we can expect not only mass raids of homes, worksites and communities, but the stripping of status from millions of people. With the scale of what has been proposed, some 28 million people could be at risk of family separation in 2025.

Given the “migrant crime” panic stoked by the Republicans, we should anticipate Trump aides like anti-immigrant zealot Stephen Miller coordinating with local sheriffs to round up those they have deemed “criminal aliens.”

When formal deportations were at their height under Obama, it was largely because of programs like Secure Communities, which automated data-sharing between agencies during the booking process. Immigrants were funneled into the deportation pipeline through local jails. Obama expanded the program across the country but eventually sunset it after opposition due to racial profiling, though similar programs continue to exist. Policing and incarceration, by design, systemically criminalize Black and Brown people. Community members arrested or convicted in this unjust system are then “punished twice” with the threat of detention and deportation. While many understandably focus on the role of the private prison industry in immigration enforcement, local jails are both a site of detention and a key gateway to the deportation process. Sanctuary laws ending these partnerships will remain an important line of defense against the mass deportation agenda.

The scale of operations that have been proposed for Trump’s mass deportations will require billions of dollars. We must push to stop the injection of resources into the deportation machine and the push back against draconian immigration policies in Congress.

During Trump’s first term, a coalition of immigrant rights and progressive groups was able to block some \$15 billion in additional funding to ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for the border wall, more agents and more detention beds through the Defund Hate campaign. Through political education about the budget process, exposing ICE and CBP abuses, coordinated actions, legislative advocacy and petition drives, the coalition persuaded a hundred members of Congress to call for cuts in funding to DHS.

While the movement to defund the police has faced backlash and the Democrats have retreated from their pro-immigrant stance, the broader demand to divest from immigration enforcement, the prison industrial complex and U.S. militarism, and instead invest in health care, education and social safety nets remains salient. Abolition will be an important guide as we tackle the new political terrain. Communities across the country continue to fight to end detention and develop local economies that don’t depend on incarceration.

Like during the previous Trump administration, many will turn to legal interventions as a tactic to throw a wrench in his plans. Litigation will be a critical strategy to mitigate the harm of the deportation machine, but we can’t just depend on lawyers to protect us. This was a major missed opportunity within the response to the Muslim Ban and family separation policy under Trump — what abolitionist legal scholar Derecka Purnell has referred to as “outsourc[ing] the resistance to lawyers.” Building

power requires ordinary people to take a stance and organize for change. The courts will not save us, and this will be even more true in the years to come as the new administration appoints more conservative judges.

Despite the right-wing capture of the immensely destructive machinery of state, we can mount an effective resistance. And we've done it before. Now is the time to build up community networks to defend immigrants and other marginalized communities who will bear the brunt of the attacks from the new administration. In conservative states, especially in the South and Southwest where local officials are ready to work with the incoming Trump administration and have already passed harsh state legislation against immigrants and those that help them, we can expect the raids and enforcement actions to be even more severe.

Legal support will be essential, but so too will grassroots efforts to stop deportations. Robust individual deportation defense campaigns involving community support and actions, coordinating bond funds to get people released and advocacy with decision makers will be necessary to both prevent family separations and expose the harms of the system. Organizing campaigns to curb ICE's reach and stop the expected massive expansion of immigration detention will be a central part of the resistance. Detention remains a key tool for facilitating deportations, and limiting the capacity to detain will help prevent deportations.

Combating the demonization of immigrants that ruled this election cycle will be no small task. Expanding the movement by educating people about their rights, exposing the harms of the system, broadening the base of support and waging campaigns against the mass deportation agenda will be critical to planting the seeds for long-term change.

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11/18: Trump vows military roundups of millions of immigrants

Patrick Martin – WSWS

President-elect Donald Trump confirmed Monday that he intends to declare a national emergency and use the US military to deport millions of migrants as soon as he takes office next January 20. Trump was quoting and endorsing a posting on his Truth Social platform by Tom Fitton, head of the ultra-right group Judicial Watch.

Fitton wrote that Trump is “prepared to declare a national emergency and will use military assets to reverse the Biden invasion through a mass deportation program.” The fascist ex-president quoted this post with a one-word endorsement: “TRUE!!”

Since this declaration was posted at 4:03 a.m. Monday morning, there has been a barrage of media reports citing unnamed Trump aides on the extensive planning that is already going on to prepare an unprecedented dictatorial attack on migrant workers and their families.

This includes detailed discussions on the expansion of detention facilities currently run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). These have already been filled by the mass arrests carried out under the Biden-Harris administration, particularly over the past year, as the Democrats sought to compete with Trump in carrying out repressive measures against migrants.

ICE does not have the available personnel required to run facilities on the scale suggested by Trump and his top immigration adviser, Stephen Miller. The operation of these detention camps would inevitably fall into the purview of the Pentagon. This would be in violation of the Posse Comitatus Act, which bars the US military from conducting law enforcement operations within the borders of the United States.

Previous administrations, including Trump's, have estimated the total number of undocumented migrants at 11 million-12 million. At least half have lived in the US for more than a decade, and have many US citizen children. In the course of his presidential campaign, Trump constantly increased the number of immigrants he would target for deportation, raising it to 15 million and then 20 million.

In effect, anyone suspected of being “illegal,” regardless of their actual status, would be swept up in the police-military dragnet, imprisoned and put on planes to take them back to countries that in many cases they have never lived in, and whose languages they don't speak. It is a formula for racial policing of the foulest character.

The scale of the threatened mass deportation effort is staggering. The largest number of immigrants ever deported in a single year is the 430,000 deported in 2013 by the Obama administration. Trump, in his first four-year term, never matched the record set by the Democratic “deporter-in-chief.”

Trump has indicated that his first target would be the 1.2 million migrants who have final deportation orders from federal immigration judges. There would also be efforts to oust the 530,000 migrants permitted under the visa waiver provisions for refugees from countries currently targeted for US destabilization campaigns, such as Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. Another measure would be the repeal of Temporary Protected Status for an additional 860,000, mainly from Venezuela, Haiti, El Salvador, Honduras and Ukraine.

Trump and Miller are also reportedly planning to challenge a key provision of the post-Civil War settlement, “birthright citizenship,” which is laid down in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which declares that any child born on US soil is automatically entitled to US citizenship.

Trump has also threatened to invoke the 1798 Alien Enemies Act, which empowers the federal government to detain “enemy aliens” during a war, although Congress has not declared war on any foreign country since 1942, during World War II. To use this law would essentially amount to declaring war on all countries whose citizens seek to cross the US-Mexico border or overstay their visas—in effect, the entire world.

The new administration would also eliminate, as quickly as legally possible, all programs which allow visa paroles or temporary status for refugees from specified countries, including Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela and most of Central America, as well as smaller groups from Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries targeted by US invasions, where local collaborators with the US military have been allowed entry to the US.

The first large-scale effort after Trump re-enters the White House is likely to be the construction of new detention facilities, including several planned near major metropolitan areas like New York City, Chicago and Houston, where there are large populations of both legal and undocumented immigrants.

Trump lawyers are already engaged in drafting executive orders which the new president could issue as soon as he is sworn in on January 20. These would include repealing Temporary Protected Status for immigrants from several countries, including Haitians—among them the 20,000 Haitians living and working in Springfield, Ohio, who were the targets of vilification and false charges by Trump and his running mate, Ohio Senator JD Vance.

Another order would repeal all executive orders issued under President Biden reversing the anti-migrant orders by Trump during his first term in office. This would include restoring the “Remain in Mexico” policy, which violates international law by compelling asylum seekers to make their claims from detention centers in Mexico rather than from within the United States.

In pursuit of a massive expansion of detention facilities, the Trump administration is expected to provide a multi-billion-dollar bonanza for private prison companies like CoreCivic and Geo, whose stock prices have soared since the November 5 election. In an earnings call with investors, CoreCivic CEO Damon Hininger reportedly declared, “We think that the outcome of this election is probably going to be notable for ICE for a couple of different reasons. One is that we do think that there’s going to be increased need for detention capacity.”

According to NBC News, Trump’s immigration team is planning to double the number of beds approved by Congress for operation by ICE, particularly near cities like New York, Washington and Chicago, and this could be accomplished by ICE contracting with private prison operators.

The New York Times reported:

“Mr. Trump’s team said it had developed a multifaceted plan to significantly increase the number of deportations, which it thought could be accomplished without new legislation from Congress, although it anticipated legal challenges.

Other elements of the team’s plan include bolstering the ranks of ICE officers with law enforcement officials who would be temporarily reassigned from other agencies, and with state National Guardsmen and federal troops activated to enforce the law on domestic soil under the Insurrection Act.

The team also plans to expand a form of due-process-free expulsions known as expedited removal, which is currently used near the border for recent arrivals, to people living across the interior of the country who cannot prove they have been in the United States for more than two years.

And the team plans to stop issuing citizenship-affirming documents, like passports and Social Security cards, to infants born on domestic soil to undocumented migrant parents in a bid to end birthright citizenship.”

The Insurrection Act is the 1807 law that Trump tried unsuccessfully to invoke in 2020 to send the Army into the streets to crush the mass protests over police violence following the public, and widely publicized, murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

12/3: Trump’s Next Term Could See Massive Expansion of ICE’s Surveillance Regime

Katya Schwenk - The Lever

For the last year, private prison companies and corporate interests have been quietly lobbying to place millions of immigrants under electronic surveillance, according to records uncovered by The Lever. Now that a second Trump administration will soon assume power, with a former prison lobbyist set to be his top legal adviser, there are signs the plans are already moving forward.

Former president Donald Trump’s victory on Nov. 5 was immediately seen as a clear win for the private prison industry. The stocks of the world’s biggest private prison companies soared in the wake of the election, and investors openly salivated over the potential profits they could see from a Trump immigration regime.

“We’re looking at a theoretical potential doubling of all of our services,” one private prison executive told investors on a Nov. 7 earnings call.

Trump’s latest pick for attorney general, Pam Bondi, is a former lobbyist for the GEO Group, one of the world’s biggest prison companies, another sign of the influence the industry may wield under the new administration.

A core profit driver for longtime immigration vendors like the GEO Group is electronic monitoring: the ankle bracelets, GPS trackers, and facial recognition technology that the government deploys on tens of thousands of immigrants across the country, threatening their privacy and well-being, as well as disrupting families and communities. Advocates warn such an expansion would intensify the harms that surveillance can inflict, often with little oversight.

Over the last year, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has been pondering a massive expansion of its surveillance regime. Last fall, under the Biden administration, a proposal surfaced to put as many as five million immigrants under electronic monitoring, as The Lever reported at the time.

Since then, according to records reviewed by The Lever, GOP lawmakers — egged on by private prison companies and even the Heritage Foundation, the corporate-backed right-wing think tank that authored Project 2025 — have pushed to drastically expand surveillance. Republican lawmakers proposed in June a combined \$35 million increase to ICE’s budget to bring millions of people under electronic monitoring.

In the wake of the election, there are now signs that ICE is gearing up to bring these plans to fruition. As Wired recently reported, on Nov. 6, the day after Trump’s victory, ICE issued a notice to private surveillance companies, signaling that it was seeking new vendors for its flagship surveillance program, the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program.

For private prison executives, the notice was telling. Damon Hininger, the CEO of CoreCivic, another private prison company that does business with ICE, told shareholders on the company’s earnings call earlier this month that the timing with the election was “probably not a coincidence.”

The plan to expand ICE’s surveillance regime predates Trump’s win — and can be traced in part to the powerful private prison lobby in Washington. As César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández, a professor of immigration law at Ohio State University, emphasized, the influence of private prison companies has been a constant in recent years.

“President-elect Trump is certainly bombastic, and we can certainly expect that his election is going to bring good fortune to private prison companies,” he said. “But under President Biden, they’ve had plenty of business too.”

The GEO Group did not respond to The Lever’s request for comment. Ryan Gustin, a spokesperson for CoreCivic, wrote that the company “has a long-standing, zero-tolerance policy not to advocate for or against any legislation that serves as the basis for — or determines the duration of — an individual’s detention.”

This “no advocacy work” claim is a common refrain from private prison companies, which still spend millions lobbying lawmakers in Washington every year on everything from prison construction to border security. “Private prison companies... will tell you that they do not push policymakers toward or away from enacting laws or creating policies that would feed more people into their surveillance pipeline,” said García Hernández.

“That’s a little hard to believe,” he continued. “There are few private businesses in any marketplace that do not have an interest in seeing their revenue sources grow.”

“Very Harmful” Surveillance

Currently, at any given time, there are around 30,000 immigrants locked up in ICE detention centers around the country, largely in facilities managed by private prison companies. But there are millions more people — whether asylum seekers, people with revoked visas, or undocumented workers — with ongoing cases in immigration court who are not in detention. ICE calls this the “non-detained docket.”

While ICE claims that it detains immigrants who pose a threat or are deemed a flight risk, it’s often not entirely clear why some people are detained during their immigration proceedings while others are released. The agency’s surveillance measures are similarly arbitrary. Around 182,000 people are currently subjected to immigration surveillance, which the agency refers to as its “alternatives to detention” programs. (The Intensive Supervision Appearance Program is the primary such program.)

Some are forced to wear ankle monitors, while others must “check in” with ICE periodically on a facial recognition-empowered smartphone app. Most recently, ICE has rolled out surveillance “watches,” wrist-worn tracking devices.

This surveillance, warned Evan Benz, a senior attorney for the Amica Center for Immigrant Rights, is “often very harmful.” Not only are ankle monitors and similar devices stigmatizing, but they have also been known to cause physical injuries like inflammation and bleeding, and in some cases, electrocuting wearers. Onerous check-in or curfew requirements can make it difficult to work or even to sleep. And there are endless privacy concerns around how ICE tracks and uses immigrants’ data.

Already, this surveillance is deployed widely; tens of thousands more immigrants are surveilled by ICE than are locked up in immigration detention. But 182,000 is a small number compared to the number of people in the U.S. with pending immigration cases; last fall, ICE estimated there were 5.7 million people in immigration proceedings.

For more than a year, conservative lawmakers and private prison companies have supported expanding ICE’s surveillance regime far beyond its current scope — from the 182,000 people enrolled in the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program to all 5.7 million people with pending immigration cases.

This proposal first surfaced last August, when ICE quietly released a request for information — a notice to its vendors — that it intended to create a single program, called Release and Reporting Management, to oversee people in immigration proceedings. While the program included some social services, its central element was the expansion of electronic monitoring, seemingly to everyone with a pending immigration case.

Private prison companies quickly took notice.

Currently, ICE’s surveillance arsenal is primarily provided by BI Incorporated, a subsidiary of the GEO Group. In 2020, the company won a five-year contract, valued at \$2.2 billion, to administer ICE’s Intensive Supervision Appearance Program. Since then, the number of people surveilled by the program has nearly doubled — a windfall for the GEO Group.

“That business, which has 50 percent margins, could be substantially higher next year if this comes through, is that correct?” one GEO Group investor asked on an earnings call last November, referring to the planned expansion of the program. The GEO Group’s CEO concurred.

“Money From These Companies Drives Policies”

Over the last year, as ICE pondered its own expansion, lawmakers have introduced multiple proposals to place millions of immigrants under electronic monitoring — encouraged by the private prison industry, which has been lobbying on these bills.

In September 2023, the House version of the 2024 Department of Homeland Security appropriations package — the legislation that allocates funding to ICE — contained a provision that mirrored ICE’s August surveillance proposals. The bill would have required anyone with a pending immigration court case to be “enrolled into the Alternatives to Detention Program with mandatory GPS monitoring.”

The bill was opposed by the Biden White House and did not survive negotiations. But it was not the last time such a requirement made its way into legislation.

In May, Rep. Bill Hagerty (R-Tenn.) introduced legislation, the “Reshape Alternatives to Detention Act,” that would require “mandatory GPS monitoring” for all immigrants with pending court cases.

Hagerty was considered a likely Trump cabinet pick, though was passed over for secretary of state. His home state of Tennessee is also home to CoreCivic’s headquarters, where the company wields significant influence over state lawmakers. CoreCivic’s CEO, Damon Hininger, has contributed more than \$10,000 to Hagerty’s campaigns since 2019.

Then, this summer, the House Appropriations Committee released its 2025 plans for ICE funding. Once again, lawmakers proposed mandatory electronic monitoring for people in immigration proceedings. “Any attempt to wind down or underutilize the program will be met with strict scrutiny from the Committee and other congressional oversight entities,” lawmakers warned.

Such an increase would be costly. A June House report on the bill explains that the package is proposing a \$30 million increase for ICE’s surveillance program for 2025, from \$320 million in 2024 to \$350 million.

The bill “is really indicative of the influence that private companies have in shaping immigration enforcement policies,” said Jesse Franzblau, a senior policy analyst at the National Immigrant Justice Center, a human rights and legal advocacy group. Franzblau noted that the GEO Group and CoreCivic both have lobbied extensively on the appropriations bills.

The bill allocates, for instance, \$5 million in funding specifically for a new “monitoring pilot program” for “wearable technologies” that provide biometric identification capabilities — language that seems tailored to the GEO Group’s new VeriWatch technology, which claims to be the “first community supervision location tracker to biometrically authenticate the identity of the wearer.”

Private prison companies have been lobbying on Hagerty’s bill and other proposals, federal lobbying disclosures show. The GEO Group reported lobbying on the Reshape Alternatives to Detention Act last quarter. So did the corporate-backed Heritage Foundation, through its lobbying arm Heritage Action for America, and the far-right, white-supremacist-linked organization Federation for American Immigration Reform, which pushes anti-immigrant policies.

“Money from these companies drives policies,” said Franzblau. “Why we’re here and facing this pending tragic attack on immigrant communities is in large part because of the incentivized nature of the immigration enforcement apparatus, where these companies play a major role in driving up enforcement.”

Trump’s win comes at a critical moment for the future of ICE’s surveillance regime. The GEO Group’s contract to run the Intensive Supervision and Appearance Program expires at the end of July 2025, giving ICE the opportunity to potentially reimagine its surveillance apparatus in the next year.

Now with a GOP trifecta of power looming, the agency may be even more empowered to do so. And while Trump has promised mass immigrant deportations, the political and financial limitations to such an ambitious plan might make surveillance a tempting fallback for Republicans, some advocates say.

For Benz, the attorney with the Amica Center for Immigrant Rights, the GOP’s recent push to increase funding for ICE’s surveillance represented some recognition that there was “no cost-effective or practical way for ICE to lawfully detain and remove all three-plus million migrants on the non-detained docket, despite what Trump and his fascist minions may be dreaming of for next year.”

Benz and others will be closely tracking the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program over the next year. For advocates, the program’s contract expiration is “a potential opportunity for advocacy to try to leverage some congressional oversight and try to get terms that are slightly more favorable,” said Benz.

“On the other side, it’s an opportunity for [surveillance contractors] to really push for a lot of additional funding from ICE,” Benz said.

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