



# Immigration Detention Expansion in Trump's Second Term



## Executive Summary

When President Trump took office in January 2025, there were roughly 40,000 people being held in immigration detention. By the start of December, that number had risen by almost 75 percent, with nearly 66,000 people held in immigration detention across the United States and the system reportedly capable of holding 70,000 people on any given day — the highest level in history. Yet this is just the start for the Trump administration, which according to leaked plans originally hoped to have nearly 108,000 immigration detention beds online by January 2026. And while the administration has not met this ambitious goal, the rapid and ongoing expansion of immigration detention has wrought enormous changes on immigration enforcement, trapping hundreds of thousands of noncitizens in an increasingly opaque world of remote jails and private prisons, where U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) can exert ever-greater pressure on the people it is jailing to give up, accept deportation, and forego any chance to remain in the United States.



President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Combined with ICE's annual appropriations, ICE has nearly \$15 billion per year to use on immigration detention through the end of fiscal year 2029.

This report aims to document the historic expansion of detention under the Trump administration. It details not only the policy changes which have led to ICE detention reaching the highest level on record, but also their impact on the individuals who have found themselves locked into it. The growth in immigration detention, and the spectacle which has accompanied the construction and use of new facilities — coupled with the near-elimination of any transparency into the operation and use of those facilities — is the backbone of President Trump's mass deportation efforts.

The changes that have occurred in detention go beyond basic questions of infrastructure and development of the capacity to detain. As immigration enforcement has become the top priority of federal law enforcement, major shifts have occurred in the profile of *who* is arrested, and therefore who is detained, to begin with.

Surges of federal law enforcement officers taken from agencies as varied as the FBI and the IRS have fanned out across the nation to carry out “at-large” arrests in American communities, **which increased by 600 percent in Trump's first nine months in office**. Targeted enforcement operations have been supplemented by **more indiscriminate worksite raids, “roving patrols,” and “collateral arrests;”** and immigrants dutifully attending court hearings and check-ins have been re-detained without warning. **The result of these changes in arrest practice has been a 2,450 percent increase in the number of people with no criminal record held in ICE detention on any given day.**

With the administration sending more people to detention centers, fewer people are being permitted to leave them while they fight their cases. **On January 20, President Trump ordered that ICE maximize its use of detention.** Within weeks, ICE stopped issuing discretionary releases, requiring immigrants held in detention centers to petition immigration judges for release



immigration judges from releasing huge swathes of immigrants on bond — **keeping them locked** in mandatory detention.

As this report reveals, rather than focusing on serious public safety threats and flight risks, the Trump administration is primarily using detention to pressure people into giving up their chance to remain in the United States. **As of November 2025, for every one person released from ICE detention pending a hearing or after being granted relief, 14.3 people were deported directly from ICE custody, up from a ratio of 1.6 in December 2024.**

Without releases, the population of people held in ICE detention has expanded rapidly. Through November, the number of **people held in ICE detention on any given day rose by nearly 75 percent from January.** The administration plans to further **increase the system by over 150 percent from January** and has already initiated contracts to add new facilities to the system. By the end of November 2025, ICE was using 104 more facilities for immigration detention than at the start of the year, a 91 percent increase..

**These new facilities** range from small county **jails offering a few beds** to previously **closed state prisons that can house over 2,000 people to newly-constructed tent facilities on military bases that can hold up to 5,000 people.** This capacity has also been augmented by new state-run detention facilities, including the infamous “Alligator Alcatraz” facility, the first-ever state immigration detention facility that is not operating under contract with ICE.

**As documented by three stories included in this report from people currently or recently held in ICE detention, conditions of confinement have grown significantly worse** as detention has expanded. **Deaths in ICE detention in 2025 were the highest ever for a non-COVID year.** And for the rising number of people held in detention, the worsening conditions have led many to simply give up their cases — even if they had viable claims.



Today, detention is at the highest level in history. In July 2025, Congress authorized \$45 billion for ICE detention, to be spent through Fiscal Year 2029. This funding comes on top of the already record high \$4 billion appropriated for ICE detention in the Fiscal than three times the entire capacity of the system at the time President Trump took office.

Private prison companies, as well as state and local governments, are set to cash in on these huge sources of funding.

With the Trump administration effectively eliminating three immigration oversight sub-agencies and prohibiting members of Congress from conducting lawful inspections, the detention system and the abuses endemic to it are more opaque than ever before. The problems with conditions in ICE detention are likely to grow only worse over the next four years. Families and adults disappear into detention in one state and reappear thousands of miles away – or in another country following a rapid deportation. While a flood of habeas corpus lawsuits has prevented some injustices, the majority of people do not have the resources or the ability to fight ICE's choice to detain.