

Immigration Enforcement: Just as Bad for Americans as it is for Immigrants

According to President Donald Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Oakland, California mayor Libby Schaaf prevented nearly 800 arrests by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in early March. That sounds like wishful thinking, but presumably Schaaf's warning to the public of impending ICE sweeps helped at least some undocumented immigrants avoid the dragnet.

Mayor Schaaf is due our gratitude for her heroism. These ICE raids highlight one side of the case for reining in (or better yet abolishing) ICE and its sister agencies, US Customs and Border Protection and the US Border patrol. That side is the human cost to immigrants: Workers yanked from factories and farms. Families torn asunder. People seeking better lives dying of dehydration in the wilderness because water caches are destroyed, or killed in crashes as they flee their would-be abductors.

Those are sound reasons for bringing these organizations to heel. But for many Americans, the issue is colored by a mistaken notion that such depredations are the price we pay for protection from ... well, something.

Mistaken, yes, but sincerely held. So let's look at things from the other side of the ledger: The costs "immigration enforcement" imposes on non-immigrants.

The budgets of CBP, Border Patrol and ICE combined top \$20 billion per year — ballpark figure, \$60 per American citizen, \$240 per year for a family of four. That's several "special occasion" family meals out, spent instead on having ICE drag off your favorite restaurant's cooks and dishwashers.

Of course, every immigration enforcement "success" makes those meals more expensive even if you eat at home. Every immigrant captured, detained, deported, etc. raises your grocery bill and makes it more expensive to put a new roof on your house. It's basic supply and demand. Economics 101: Artificially reducing labor supplies raises labor costs.

Why are we paying through the nose for the privilege of paying through the nose?

Then there's the "Constitution-free zone," the 100-mile perimeter around the United States in which most of the population lives and in which respect for constitutional protections is treated as, at best, optional. If a federal immigration enforcer doubts which side of the border you're from, any pretense that America's a free country goes right out the window.

If you've never been stopped at a Border Patrol checkpoint or intercepted by immigration enforcers in the "Constitution-free zone," just watch a movie set in Nazi Germany or the

post-war Soviet bloc. That should give you a sense of the “are your papers in order?” vibe.

What do non-immigrants get out of ICE, Border Patrol and CBP? An expensive police state premised on the silly and evil idea that the peaceful movement of people across imaginary lines drawn by politicians ought to be, or even can be, controlled.

The whole idea of “immigration enforcement” is bad for immigrants and natives alike. It violates the rights of both groups while damaging the American economy and making us all poorer. These agencies and their activities are a repudiation of America itself. Time to defund and eliminate them.