

## **Biography of George Retes**

---

Submitted to the House Homeland Security Committee  
ahead of the April 22, 2026 hearing titled  
Funding Lapse and Security Gaps: Assessing the Harmful Impacts of the DHS Shutdown  
on Americans

George Retes, Jr. is a native Southern Californian, a father, and a disabled U.S. Army veteran. After high school, he enlisted in the Army, serving as an infantryman at bases in Georgia, Alaska, and Texas, and completing a combat deployment to Iraq. Wanting to be close to his young children, George received an honorable discharge and returned to Ventura County, where he built a civilian career as a security guard.

On July 10, 2025, George's life changed when he was driving to his shift at a farm in Camarillo, California and encountered a large-scale federal immigration enforcement operation. Despite identifying himself as a U.S. citizen and a veteran, George was pepper-sprayed, had his car window smashed, and was forcibly detained by federal agents. He was held for more than 72 hours at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles, without being charged, without access to a lawyer or a phone call, and without medical care for the chemical agents covering his body. He was never told why he was being held. He missed his daughter's third birthday. He was released without charges or an apology.

George has since become a nationally recognized advocate for federal officer accountability and constitutional rights. In December 2025, he testified at a bicameral public forum held by U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Ranking Member of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and U.S. Representative Robert Garcia (D-CA), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. In February 2026, he attended the State of the Union as the guest of Congressman Mark Takano, the ranking member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. With the Institute for Justice, George has filed a federal lawsuit under the Federal Tort Claims Act challenging the constitutional violations he endured, a case his attorneys have said they intend to take to the Supreme Court. His story has been covered by the New York Times, Military Times, NPR, CNN, and numerous other national outlets.