

FUNDING LAPSE AND SECURITY GAPS: ASSESSING THE HARMFUL IMPACTS OF THE DHS
SHUTDOWN ON AMERICANS

Hearing Before the House Homeland Security Committee

Testimony of Ryan Ecklund
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Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee—My name is Ryan Ecklund.

I'm a lifelong Minnesota resident, a business owner, a husband, a father—and a United States citizen. On January 7th Renee Good was shot and killed in Minneapolis by ICE. She left behind loved ones including a young son. This event was broadcast worldwide and immediately sparked conversations about what immigration agents were really doing in Minnesota. When my older son asked my wife and I if ICE was going to come to our East Metro suburb of Woodbury, my wife gave what she thought was a truthful answer: That ICE would probably stay in more densely populated areas, and that he and his friends would remain safe.

Just five days later my family and I learned that was not the case.

On Monday, January 12, after dropping my son off at school I went to the grocery store less than a mile from our home. I saw a vehicle with heavily tinted windows and Texas license plates slowly rolling through the parking lot. As they drove by I noticed men in tactical gear and face coverings. At that moment I made a decision to grab my phone and record the vehicle as I followed from a safe distance. Now, I have been asked by many people why I made that decision, and the simple answer was and continues to be *accountability*. Up to this point ICE and their presence in the Twin Cities had been well documented, and I felt a strong conviction to continue to hold these individuals and the administration who sent them here to spread fear and intimidation accountable for their actions in my own community. As other events showed, the best way to hold federal officials in Minneapolis accountable for their misconduct was by documenting their actions, so that's what I did.

Once the vehicle noticed me following, the agents parked in another area and I parked a few spaces away. An ICE agent in military fatigues came up to my window and took my photo, said nothing, got back into the vehicle, and left the shopping area. I followed them down the road as they then turned in to my neighborhood and drove right in front of my house. I realized they had likely used facial recognition software to identify me. *Please consider this for a moment* – that a government agent used advanced technology to identify and intimidate a US citizen for exercising his First Amendment rights. What purpose does this serve? Remember, these agents were not in pursuit of a violent criminal; they were lurking in a grocery store parking lot at 9:45 in the morning. I followed them out of my neighborhood, and an additional vehicle joined the front of our caravan. After the agents boxed-in my car, five masked ICE agents then approached my vehicle.

One of the agents opened my door and another agent came through the back seat and put me in a choke hold. They forced me from my vehicle and to the ground.

I was never ordered out of the vehicle, and at no point did any of these men identify themselves. One agent had a knee on my back, and one had a knee on my neck – that agent moved and scraped my face on the pavement. My hands were forced behind my back and I was handcuffed. I was put into an unmarked van and transported to the Whipple Federal Building. Once at the Federal Building I was put into leg irons and into an empty holding cell. Throughout my nine-hour, unlawful detention I was joined by eight additional detainees, each one a US citizen. The young man who entered after me was an apprentice plumber and said that he was on a new home construction job site in the South Metro when ICE came onto the property. One of the agents demanded that this young man shake his hand and when he refused, he was taken into custody.

I was released that evening with no charges, and less than two weeks later Alex Pretti, who former Secretary Noem called a "domestic terrorist", was shot 10 times by ICE. The siege on the people of the Twin Cities by their own government has forever altered our State. And in response, Minnesotans did what we always do; we showed up for one another. We *stood* up for one another. We supported our neighbors, delivered food to those who didn't feel safe leaving their homes, and stood with our children at the bus stop so they wouldn't feel scared. We protected and supported our immigrant-owned businesses. We proved that Minnesota is not a place, but a way of being. This administration hoped the Twin Cities would be a proving ground for the farce that was Operation Metro Surge; instead they learned what Minnesotans have always known; "We All Do Better When We All Do Better."

After thousands of arrests, unlawful detentions, and documented violations of constitutional rights—we still cannot answer a basic question: How many dangerous individuals were actually removed? Why refuse state and local agencies access to investigations? A government proud of its accomplishments would certainly report about what a success this had been. Instead the government has denied, deflected, and scapegoated those in leadership roles to avoid accountability. ICE assaulted and detained thousands of lawful residents, U.S. citizens, immigrants here legally and those on a path to citizenship – they went after our entire community, not the “worst of the worst.”

We will spend years accounting for the financial toll taken on the Twin Cities. We will spend years recovering from the fear instilled in our valued immigrant communities.

But I believe in us. Minnesotans showed the world what courage looks like.

When operations like this are carried out without precision, without transparency, and without accountability—they impact entire communities. This Committee has a responsibility to demand answers. To demand accurate data.

The American people deserve the truth, and our citizens demand
accountability; only those who want to avoid accountability need to wear masks.