

# Seattle Welcoming City Policies Keep Immigrants Safe

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Connor Nash, Connor Nash



Activists march along Alki Beach to protest the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Trump administration's immigration policies on Feb. 2, 2025.(Photo: Alex Garland)

Two months after federal agents killed Alex Pretti and Renee Good, the fear campaign being waged against immigrant communities has largely dropped from the front-page headlines. But don't be fooled.

The people who gave those agents their orders — and smeared the memories of Pretti and Good hours after their deaths — remain determined to target immigrants and their neighborhoods. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin recently promised the MAGA right that the White House is not pivoting or prioritizing violent criminals, just "purposely trying to be a little bit more quiet" about pursuing the same goals.

As the administration hopes you turn your attention somewhere else, places like Seattle continue to be targeted over our city's choice to welcome immigrants. We refuse to deprive our undocumented neighbors of equal access to basic public safety services and basic dignity — which continues to make MAGA big mad.

I have served as both a local and federal prosecutor and a pro-tem municipal court judge for the last decade, working every day to make our communities safer. My colleagues in the public safety profession know that the right-wing rhetoric about "sanctuary cities" is contrary to reality.

If immigrants are not safe here, we are all less safe. That's not some abstract touchy-feely sentiment; it's a hard mechanical fact. What happens if the key witness to a crime is too afraid of ICE to take the witness stand and help my prosecutors get actual violent offenders off the street? What happens if a major chunk of the taxpaying workforce of our city is too afraid of ICE to go to work?

Immigrant communities make Seattle strong. Their contributions to our culture, our economy, and our civic identity have helped shape our city and our region for generations.

When immigrant communities do not feel safe interacting with law enforcement and other government services, that means that they're less likely to call police or firefighters when there is an emergency.

That's why our welcoming city policies are so important. Seattle residents can seek help knowing that flagging down a police officer or reporting a crime to 911 will not result in deportation.

The anti-immigrant political right loves to howl about so-called "sanctuary cities." They frequently lie about what those cities actually do (and don't do) around the intersection of undocumented immigration status and crime.

Some of the most damaging misinformation centers on what happens when a state or local jurisdiction has someone in custody for breaking state or local law, and federal immigration agents believe that same person is in the country without lawful immigration status. The right would have you believe that welcoming jurisdictions actively conceal community members with uncertain immigration status from the feds.

The reality is that welcoming jurisdictions, like our city, still honor lawful warrants signed by judges for people, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.

When a jail or prison or police department has a judicial warrant, they know due process has been followed, and they do their part in that process faithfully.

Trump administration officials know that ICE's deadly treatment of Minnesotans, Chicagoans, and others has consequences. That's why Secretary Mullin is trying to reassure the far right that he still wants to deport every single person without legal status, including those who commit no crimes and those who've built lives and families and businesses in our community for decades. He just wants to do it outside the public eye.

For Mullin and other anti-immigrant crusaders, the real problem isn't that they can't get dangerous people deported. It is that they don't want to let judges look at their work. They don't want the public to see how they operate. And they don't want to stop at "the worst of the worst" — they want to systematically uproot entire communities.

And if they had their way, our entire community would be less safe. Because if they could force state and local governments to take on the work of immigration enforcement — a strictly federal function we cannot be compelled to do for them — then our neighbors and loved ones would have to think twice before calling 911 when they need help.

Or when you do.

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*Ericka Evans is the Seattle city attorney.*

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