

ICE Accountability Act

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Currently, no watchdog overseeing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) operates with full independence from President Trump and with the speed, nimbleness, and enforcement authority necessary to meet the current moment. DHS's Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) often take over a year to complete audits and issue findings, and both are led by presidential appointees. Like other Inspectors General, OIG works under the general supervision of the Secretary and, although the Secretary is prohibited from interfering with investigations, DHS reportedly [warned](#) OIG that Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem may "unilaterally kill its investigations." Meanwhile, other key DHS watchdogs, the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman, both report to the Secretary and, under the Trump Administration, have been gutted.

As masked Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents kill American citizens, use tear gas on children, stop people on the street based on their race, and break down the front doors of homes with no judicial warrant, Congress must strengthen rules for what immigration agents can do and strictly enforce those rules. Enforcement can and must include more rigorous, rapid, and independent oversight than our current watchdogs allow.

Congress has the opportunity to draw on local best practices — from [Chicago](#), to [Baltimore](#), to [Cleveland](#) — for empowering independent monitors to ensure law enforcement complies with reforms. The *ICE Accountability Act* would create the strongest watchdog in the federal government to supplement existing immigration oversight processes. It would:

- **Establish an ICE/CBP monitoring commission** that sits in the legislative branch, reports to Congress, and is fully independent of the President — similar to past congressional oversight commissions (like the [9/11 Commission](#) that investigated the 9/11 attack or the [Congressional Oversight Panel](#) that investigated financial markets after the 2008 crash). A nonpartisan Executive Director with nationally recognized law enforcement expertise would lead staff to conduct daily monitoring, and four monitors jointly selected by majority and minority leadership in Congress would vote on findings.
- **Give the commission “golden key” access to DHS’s immigration operations**, including with the ability to: conduct on-the-ground monitoring through ride-alongs with agents and visits to detention facilities; review body camera footage, civilian complaints, and DHS documentation; and issue subpoenas if DHS stonewalls the monitors.
- **Require prompt public reporting to maximize transparency**, with the commission issuing monthly reports, holding hearings, and maintaining a public website with reports, data on ICE/CBP operations, civilian complaint information, and recommended reforms.
- **Allow monitors to seek judicial enforcement in the event of serious or willful violations**, through court-ordered remedies and referrals of criminal matters to prosecutors.