



February 19, 2025

The Honorable Members of the United States Senate
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The Project On Government Oversight (POGO) strongly opposes the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Resolution, which passed the Senate Budget Committee last week and which is expected to come to the Senate floor as soon as this week.

From the \$7,600 Pentagon coffee maker of the 1980s to millions in potentially fraudulent PPP loans distributed during COVID-19, POGO has always raised the alarm on waste, fraud, and abuse in federal spending.¹ That is why we are speaking out, in the strongest possible terms, against the budget resolution currently under consideration in Congress.

The resolution calls for drastic increases in resources (up to \$175 billion) for the Department of Homeland Security.² Supporters say these funds are necessary to “secure the border and deport criminals.”³ In fact, the number of people crossing the U.S.-Mexico border between ports of entry fell throughout 2024, and have now dropped to the lowest levels since the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴

Congress cannot write a blank check to DHS — especially given that agency’s history of accountability failures.

¹ Danielle Brian, “Economic Impacts of the National Security Build-up: Government Procurement Practices,” Project On Government Oversight, November 8, 2002, <https://www.pogo.org/testimonies/economic-impacts-of-national-security-build-up-government-procurement-practices>; Nick Schwellenbach et al., “The Great Pandemic Swindle: Feds Botched Review of Billions in Suspect PPP Loans,” Project On Government Oversight, October 6, 2022, <https://www.pogo.org/investigations/the-great-pandemic-swindle-feds-botched-review-of-billions-in-suspect-ppp-loans>.

² Senate Budget Resolution, Fiscal Year 2025, 119th Cong., § 2001, https://www.budget.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/chairmans_mark_-_fy25_budget_resolution.pdf.

³ United States Senate Committee on the Budget, “Chairman Graham Unveils FY 2025 Budget Resolution To Secure The Border, Revitalize Our Military, Unleash American Energy Production And Begin The Process Of Restoring Fiscal Sanity,” Press Release, February 7, 2025, <https://www.budget.senate.gov/chairman/newsroom/press/chairman-graham-unveils-fy-2025-budget-resolution-to-secure-the-border-revitalize-our-military-unleash-american-energy-production-and-begin-the-process-of-restoring-fiscal-sanity>.

⁴ “Encounters with migrants from many countries have declined sharply since the end of 2023,” Pew Research Center, last modified September 26, 2024, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/10/01/migrant-encounters-at-u-s-mexico-border-have-fallen-sharply-in-2024/sr_24-09-20_migrantencounters_2/; U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “CBP Releases December 2024 Monthly Update,” Press Release, January 14, 2025, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/national-media-release/cbp-releases-december-2024-monthly-update>.

Throughout Republican and Democratic administrations, POGO has repeatedly documented failures of accountability at DHS, particularly within Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), where much of the funding would go.⁵

In recent years, we've exposed ways that this agency has failed the migrants in its custody, the American citizens under its jurisdiction, and even the staff it employs. We've written, for example, about:

- Transparency and accountability failures in how the U.S. Border Patrol has used its overbroad authority to engage in surveillance, racial profiling, arbitrary arrests, and detention.⁶
- Chronic problems across DHS with reports of excessive force and sexual misconduct, which have continued for years with little accountability.⁷
- The revolving door between DHS and private, for-profit prison companies, which detain people in unsafe, inhumane, and sometimes fatal conditions.⁸
- Repeated, ongoing accountability failures within the DHS inspector general's office, including refusals to investigate uses of force against migrants and citizens from Texas to Oregon to Washington, DC.⁹

⁵ Sahil Kapur et al., "Trump's border czar is 'begging' for money for immigration crackdown, Senate budget chief says," NBC News, February 11, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/trump-border-czar-money-immigration-crackdown-graham-rcna191747>.

⁶ Katherine Hawkins, Project On Government Oversight, *The Border Zone Next Door, and Its Out-of-Control Police Force* (January 10, 2023), <https://www.pogo.org/reports/the-border-zone-next-door-and-its-out-of-control-police-force>; Katherine Hawkins, "Dismantling Asylum While Pretending to Save It," Project On Government Oversight, April 5, 2023, <https://www.pogo.org/analysis/dismantling-asylum-while-pretending-to-save-it>.

⁷ Sarah Turberville and Chris Rickerd, Project On Government Oversight, *An Oversight Agenda for Customs and Border Protection: America's Largest, Least Accountable Law Enforcement Agency*, (October 12, 2021), <https://www.pogo.org/reports/an-oversight-agenda-for-customs-and-border-protection-americas-largest-least-accountable-law-enforcement-agency>; Adam Zagorin and Nick Schwellenbach, "Protecting the Predators at DHS," Project On Government Oversight, April 7, 2022, <https://www.pogo.org/investigations/protecting-the-predators-at-dhs>; Katherine Hawkins, "Leadership Crisis at Customs and Border Protection," Project On Government Oversight, June 25, 2024, <https://www.pogo.org/analysis/leadership-crisis-at-customs-and-border-protection>.

⁸ Nick Schwellenbach and Rene Kladzyk, "Private Prison Giant Hired ICE Detention Chief," Project On Government Oversight, January 17, 2025, <https://www.pogo.org/investigations/private-prison-giant-hired-ice-detention-chief>; Freddy Martinez and Nick Schwellenbach, "DHS's Secret Reports on ICE Detention," Project On Government Oversight, August 21, 2023, <https://www.pogo.org/investigations/dhss-secret-reports-on-ice-detention>; Katherine Hawkins, "Medical Neglect at a Denver Immigration Jail," Project On Government Oversight, May 21, 2019, <https://www.pogo.org/investigations/medical-neglect-at-a-denver-immigration-jail>; Katherine Hawkins and Emma Stodder, "Past Deaths in Custody Highlight Dire Risks for Immigration Detainees During Coronavirus Outbreak," Project On Government Oversight, April 29, 2020, <https://www.pogo.org/investigations/past-deaths-in-custody-highlight-dire-risks-for-immigration-detainees-during-coronavirus-outbreak>; Nick Schwellenbach, Mia Steinle, Katherine Hawkins, and Andrea Peterson, "Isolated: ICE Confines Some Detainees with Mental Illness in Solitary for Months," Project On Government Oversight, August 14, 2019, <https://www.pogo.org/investigations/isolated-ice-confines-some-detainees-with-mental-illness-in-solitary-for-months>.

⁹ "The Tip of the Iceberg," *Bad Watchdog*, Project On Government Oversight, January 26, 2023, <https://www.pogo.org/podcasts/bad-watchdog/bad-watchdog-episode-2>; Sarah Turberville and Chris Rickerd, Project On Government Oversight, *An Oversight Agenda for Customs and Border Protection: America's Largest,*

- The likelihood of severe and widespread violations of due process through the nationwide use of “expedited removal.”¹⁰

The dangers that the increased funding will be used to harm American communities is underscored by the actions already taken by the second Trump administration.¹¹ Despite the decrease in the number of border crossings, ICE is seeking to double its detention capacity to 100,000.¹² To reach that number, the agency is planning to lower detention standards, restart long-term family detention, and send detainees to federal prisons.¹³ It has already flown over 100 men to Guantanamo, claiming, but not providing evidence, that many of them were affiliated with gangs, with plans to expand the detention site to over 30,000 people.¹⁴

A massive increase in immigration enforcement funding channeled to an agency with a long and documented history of accountability failures will almost certainly enable much worse abuses. Based on CBP’s mistreatment of protestors in Portland and other cities in 2020 and the

Least Accountable Law Enforcement Agency, (October 12, 2021), <https://www.pogo.org/reports/an-oversight-agenda-for-customs-and-border-protection-americas-largest-least-accountable-law-enforcement-agency>.

¹⁰ Spurthi Kontham, “Expedited Removal, Explained,” Project On Government Oversight, December 21, 2023, <https://www.pogo.org/newsletters/the-bridge/expedited-removal-explained>; Project On Government Oversight, Comment Letter on Proposed Rule on Designating Aliens for Expedited Removal (September 23, 2019), <https://www.pogo.org/public-comments/pogo-comment-on-expansion-of-expedited-removal>.

¹¹ The administration has taken steps to undo modest reforms by Customs and Border Protection, including the deployment of body-worn cameras. Ali Bradley, “Border agents to stop using body cameras,” *Border Report*, updated February 17, 2025, <https://www.borderreport.com/news/border-agents-to-stop-using-body-cameras/>. ICE and CBP have removed restrictions on arrests at schools, hospitals, clinics, and churches, leading to drops in school attendance and canceled medical appointments. Eduardo Cuevas, “People are becoming wary of hospitals, leaving waiting rooms empty and doctors concerned,” *USA Today*, February 7, 2025, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/health-wellness/2025/02/07/ice-immigration-policy-impacting-hospitals/78299746007/>; Jasmine Garsd, “The prospect of immigration agents entering schools is sending shockwaves among communities,” NPR, February 4, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/04/nx-s1-5277170/schools-ice-immigration>. The administration has expanded expedited removal nationwide, and encouraged agents to consider using it against noncitizens who entered the United States legally. Hamed Aleaziz, “Trump Expands Quick Deportations Across the U.S.,” *New York Times*, January 21, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/21/us/politics/trump-deportations-immigration.html>; Hamed Aleaziz, “Trump Officials Move to Quickly Expel Migrants Biden Allowed In Temporarily,” *New York Times*, January 26, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/23/us/politics/trump-immigrants-deportation.html>.

¹² Eric Bradner, “Trump’s border czar says he’ll need funding and at least 100K beds to carry out deportation plans,” CNN Politics, December 18, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/12/18/politics/border-czar-homan-trump-deportation-plans/index.html>.

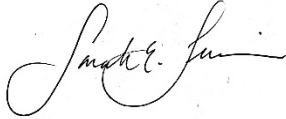
¹³ Ted Hesson, “ICE aims to lower US immigration detention standards to encourage more sheriffs to aid crackdown,” Reuters, February 1, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-aims-lower-immigration-detention-standards-let-more-jails-2025-02-01/>; Julia Ainsley, “Trump administration preparing to restart immigrant family detention,” NBC News, February 7, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/trump-administration-preparing-restart-immigrant-family-detention-rcna191230>; Eric Katz, “Federal prisons to house ICE detainees as Trump furthers immigration crackdown,” *Government Executive*, February 7, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/management/2025/02/federal-prisons-house-ice-detainees-trump-furthers-immigration-crackdown/402850/>; Keri Blakinger, “Trump administration may send Bay area immigrants to Bay Area ‘rape club’ prison, email shows,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 12, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-02-12/trump-administration-immigrants-dublin-federal-prison>.

¹⁴ Silvia Foster-Frau, Ana Vanessa Herrero, and María Luisa Paúl, “Relatives and records cast doubt on Guantánamo migrants being ‘worst of the worst,’” *Washington Post*, February 16, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2025/02/16/trump-guantanamo-migrants-deportations-venezuela/>.

administration's recent attempt to unconstitutionally end birthright citizenship, those abuses are unlikely to be restricted to non-citizens.¹⁵ Under no circumstances should Congress write a blank check to fund them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sarah E. Turberville
Director, The Constitution Project
Project On Government Oversight

Katherine Hawkins
Senior Legal Analyst
Project On Government Oversight

¹⁵ American Immigration Council, *Beyond the Border: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Presence at Racial Justice Protests in Summer of 2020*, (September 20, 2023), <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/foia/cbp-presence-racial-justice-protests-summer-2020>; Michael Casey and Mike Catalini, "Fourth federal judge blocks Trump's birthright citizenship order," Associated Press, February 13, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-birthright-citizenship-ruling-boston-3e442a97de8398dc4faf691857ea48ea>.