

Statement by Chris Crane, President,
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Before the
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs

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Good morning,

President Trump and DHS Secretary John Kelly have been unapologetic in their commitment to enforce the laws enacted by Congress. We believe that recent statistics released by CBP showing a sharp decline in illegal entries is a direct result of their leadership, and that in the long term illegal entries will continue to decline if strong interior enforcement and proper international messaging on U.S. immigration policy continues.

For the last eight years, our organization has communicated clearly to the American public and members of Congress regarding what we believe is needed to stop illegal immigration into the United States. While many have tried to make the strategy for stopping illegal immigration a complicated matter, it is not. Border security must continue, but in addition to that the United States must enforce its laws on the interior of the country, and as a nation send a very clear message to the rest of the world that illegal entry into the United States and overstay will not be condoned or permitted. The United States must stop dangling a carrot and drawing people into this country, encouraging them to violate U.S. laws. Interior enforcement is the key to effective border security, which up to this point has been ignored.

During my career at ICE I have never had the opportunity to commend a sitting U.S. President, or DHS Secretary, but I'm doing so today. Amidst all of the hammering from the media, and protests from special interest groups, President Trump and Secretary Kelly haven't wavered, but instead continued steadfast in their support of the rule of law and our officers in the field. If they continue on that course, countless lives will be saved and the victimization now seen so often, as the result of illegal immigration, will dramatically decline. Law enforcement saves lives. If Congress will support ICE officers and allow them to perform their mission, they'll prove it to you.

We need more officers and staff in ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) – the group within ICE carrying out the majority of ICE’s immigration mission. Currently ERO has around 5,000 officers to police approximately 11 million illegal aliens, as well as millions of other lawfully admitted foreign nationals, in 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, Saipan and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We are set up for failure. Compare ICE ERO’s 5,000 officers to the approximately 35,000 officers on the New York City Police Department alone.

We enthusiastically support the additional officers identified in President Trump’s executive order on interior enforcement. However, we have very little faith in the ability of ICE leadership to most effectively implement these additional officers and support staff. From our perspective, ICE should be making every effort to provide U.S. taxpayers the biggest bang for the buck. As staffing increases are considered and planned, ICE leadership should be thinking outside the box and innovating – looking at new ways, for example, to have our officers do less paperwork and data entry, and more law enforcement. ICE needs to adjust duties and change position descriptions for certain support staff, allowing for the expansion of the law enforcement duties our officers currently perform in the field. These types of changes could dramatically affect staffing models and costs submitted to Congress. However, from what we’ve seen thus far, proposed staffing increases at ICE have simply become a numbers drill at ICE. No changes, no innovation, and no improvements, just basically double our staffing numbers and call it a day. The only positive takeaway for us at this point is that the agency and union appear in agreement conceptually on the need to not only maintain our current hiring and academy standards, but increase standards in some areas prior to the beginning of any significant hiring.

While there is no question that morale within ICE is at its highest in many years, the President’s emphasis on enforcing the nation’s laws will not completely solve the overall

employee morale crisis within the agency. As with DHS in general, and other component agencies within DHS, such as TSA, the Secret Service and Border Patrol, ICE is suffering from a toxic and failed management culture; an absence of leadership. In 2014 ICE was dead last in morale among 314 federal agencies surveyed; in 2015 ICE was second from last, and last year sixth from last. As a point of comparison, while many DHS agencies like ICE hover at the bottom of government wide morale, around the 300 range in surveys, last year the U.S. Marshals Service was ranked 80th, and the DEA and FBI tied for 90th place. Congress, the American public, incoming DHS leadership, and indeed the White House, should all be alarmed by the state of morale within DHS and its law enforcement agencies that are all so critical to America's public safety and national security.

“Screw up and move up” is the general term used by many ICE employees to describe their supervision from their first-line supervisors all the way up to the Director of ICE. “Screw up and move up” obviously denoting that our worst employees are the ones promoted to supervisory and leadership positions. Most employees refuse to report misconduct committed by supervisors because employees have zero trust in DHS and ICE internal affairs offices to effectively carry out investigations against ICE supervisors. Likewise, most employees have zero faith in the integrity of ICE leadership to issue appropriate discipline to subordinate managers who have committed misconduct. At ICE it's a “good ol' boy network” in which supervisors cover for supervisors, and only rank and file employees are held accountable. Subordinate supervisors are not managed by their superiors; supervisors are permitted to harass, discriminate and retaliate at will. The workplace in many areas within ICE is toxic. Established in 2003, ICE has practically no policies. The agency generally depends on INS policies from 20 years ago or

more, or no policy at all. Law enforcement officers within ICE generally do not believe they have the full support of ICE leadership to carry out the agency mission.

During the last eight years, ICE employees and officers have been publicly demoralized by their own government. Many lawmakers, pundits for political parties, and the previous Administration, have consistently made disparaging remarks about ICE employees, their mission, and the laws they are sworn to uphold. In fact, these actions continue as ICE officers and their arrest activities are incorrectly portrayed and referenced publicly in the media by political pundits as “gestapo” tactics and other Nazi references and false and hateful accusations. It’s pretty hard every day to maintain morale when your own government and the media turn on you for enforcing the laws enacted by Congress. Perhaps more importantly, this rhetoric places the safety and lives of our officers at risk. When our nation’s lawmakers and government show no respect for the rule of law and the officers who enforce it, criminals feel empowered to become resistant and aggressive, and likewise lose respect for law enforcement officers. As Secretary Kelly spent 40 years of his life leading within an organization with one of the world’s greatest leadership traditions, we are hopeful that he will work hand in hand with us in making dramatic changes to the leadership and management cultures within ICE. We hope that he will have the full support of the President in doing so. We need our piece of the swamp drained.

At the Congressional level, our officers and employees desperately need your support. We need your support in terms of additional officers, staff and equipment, but we also need you to support the rule of law and the officers who enforce it. Everything you say and do has consequences. Talk of amnesty will create another run on the border. Disparaging comments about our officers will put their safety at risk. If you don’t show respect for the laws enacted by Congress, neither will our state level leaders, citizens, or those from other countries. We can

significantly stop the flow of illegal immigration into the United States, and with it much of the needless death and victimization that accompanies it, if we have the support of our government in enforcing our nation's laws.

Thank you and that concludes my testimony.