

## Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force Letter On Safe Act

February 10, 2015

The Honorable Trey Gowdy

Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security

1404 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren

Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security

1401 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Gowdy and Ranking Member Lofgren:

We, the undersigned law enforcement officers, write to express our opposition to the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act, which was previously introduced in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress as H.R. 2278. By requiring state and local law enforcement to become immigration agents, the SAFE Act distracts local law enforcement from our core public safety mission.

Immigration enforcement is, first and foremost, a federal responsibility. Immigration enforcement at the state and local levels diverts limited resources from public safety. State and local law enforcement agencies face tight budgets and should not be charged with the federal government's role in enforcing federal immigration laws. Rather than apprehending and removing immigrants who have no criminal background or affiliation and are merely seeking to work or reunite with family, it is more important for state and local law enforcement to focus limited resources and funding on true threats to public safety and security.

Additionally, state and local law enforcement need the trust of our communities to do our

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primary job, which is apprehending criminals and protecting the public. Immigrants should feel safe in their communities and comfortable calling upon law enforcement to report crimes, serving as witnesses, and calling for help in emergencies. This improves community policing and safety for everyone.

The SAFE Act threatens to undermine trust between immigrant communities and state and local law enforcement. When state and local law enforcement agencies are required to enforce federal immigration laws, undocumented residents may become fearful that they, or people they know, will be exposed to immigration officials and are less likely to cooperate. This undermines trust between law enforcement and these communities, creating breeding grounds for criminal enterprises.

Rather than requiring state and local law enforcement agencies to engage in additional immigration enforcement activities, Congress should focus on overdue reforms to allow state and local law enforcement to focus their resources on true threats — dangerous criminals and criminal organizations. We believe that state and local law enforcement must work together with federal authorities to protect our communities and that we can best serve our communities by leaving the enforcement of immigration laws to the federal government.

We continue to recognize that what our broken system truly needs is a permanent legislative solution. We believe the SAFE Act is the wrong approach. Our immigration problem is a national problem deserving of a national approach.

One of the key lessons learned from past reform efforts is that *all* parts of our complex immigration system are interrelated, and must be dealt with in a cohesive manner, or we will see the results of unintended consequences and will need to revisit the issues again in the future as the failings become apparent. Movement to a piecemeal, enforcement-only model that foists responsibilities on state and local law enforcement is not the answer. The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress has a tremendous opportunity to fix our broken immigration system, advancing reforms that will help the economy and secure our borders. We look forward to continuing this positive discussion on how best to move forward with passing broad immigration reform into law.

Sincerely,

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Chief J. Thomas Manger, President, Major Cities Chiefs Police Association (MCCA)

Chief Art Acevedo, Austin, Texas, Police Department

Chief Richard Biehl, Dayton, Ohio, Police Department

Chief Chris Burbank, Salt Lake City, Utah, Police Department

Sheriff Adell Dobey, Edgefield Country, South Carolina, Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Clarence Dupnik, Pima County, Arizona, Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Tony Estrada, Santa Cruz County, Arizona, Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Paul Fitzgerald, Story County, Iowa, Sheriff's Office

Assistant Chief Randy Gaber, Madison, Wisconsin, Police Department

Chief Ron Haddad, Dearborn, Michigan, Police Department

Chief James Hawkins, Garden City, Kansas, Police Department

Chief Dwight Henninger, Vail, Colorado, Police Department

Chief Michael Koval, Madison, Wisconsin, Police Department

Chief Jose Lopez, Durham, North Carolina, Police Department

Sheriff Leon Lott, Richland County, South Carolina, Sheriff's Office

Chief Ron Teachman, South Bend, Indiana, Police Department

Chief Mike Tupper, Marshalltown, Iowa, Police Department

Sheriff Lupe Valdez, Dallas County, Texas, Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Donny Youngblood, Kern County, California, Sheriff's Office

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\*signatories updated 2/12/2015

