# Law Enforcement Letter: Do Not Impose Misguided Immigration Policies

*Sweeping Legislation  Would Undermine Community Policing, Safety*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Law enforcement leaders have sent a letter to Congress opposing sweeping, "one-size-fits-all" legislation that would undermine community policing and community safety.

Proposals such as HR 3009, likely to come to a vote on the House floor Thursday, would threaten funding for law enforcement in so-called "sanctuary cities," which Congress is defining exceedingly broadly.

"As law enforcement leaders dedicated to preserving the safety and security of our communities, we are deeply troubled by the tragic murder of Kathryn Steinle in San Francisco on July 1, 2015," the letter begins. "Like other Americans, we are concerned that a dangerous criminal with multiple felonies was out in the streets, and our hearts go out to Ms. Steinle's family and friends.

"Even before this tragic incident, we have been alarmed to see various legislative proposals that would attempt to impose ineffective 'one-size-fits-all' policies that would cause great harm to our departments and our communities," the letter continues. "These troubling proposals are increasing in a misguided attempt to address Ms. Steinle's murder."

The letter is signed by 24 police and sheriffs from around the country, all members of the Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force. Full text of the letter is below.

In addition, Richard S. Biehl, police chief in Dayton, Ohio, will testify Thursday morning at a hearing held by House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security (read Biehl's full testimony). And J. Thomas Manger, president of the Major Cities Chiefs Police Association, testified Monday before the Senate Judiciary Committee (read Manger's testimony).

Under Biehl, the Dayton Police Department has implemented policies that refine strategies for working with federal immigration enforcement, lay out guidelines for interacting with immigrant witnesses and victims and publicize federal laws that offer protection to cooperative witnesses and victims.

"I do not consider Dayton a 'sanctuary city.' Nor have I heard any of our elected officials call Dayton a 'sanctuary city.' Yet, some of the current federal legislative proposals would include Dayton in their one-size-fits-all solution," Biehl's submitted testimony reads. "I am concerned that a poorly conceived response of compelling states and localities to carry out

certain immigration policies will undermine trust between law enforcement and immigrant communities."

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The following letter from 24 law enforcement leaders is also available online.

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:

As law enforcement leaders dedicated to preserving the safety and security of our communities, we are deeply troubled by the tragic murder of Kathryn Steinle in San Francisco on July 1, 2015. Like other Americans, we are concerned that a dangerous criminal with multiple felonies was out in the streets, and our hearts go out to Ms. Steinle's family and friends.

Even before this tragic incident, we have been alarmed to see various legislative proposals that would attempt to impose ineffective "one-size-fits-all" policies that would cause great harm to our departments and our communities. These troubling proposals are increasing in a misguided attempt to address Ms. Steinle's murder. Some would defund or condition funding of "sanctuary cities," including H.R. 3002 and H.R. 3009 in the House, Sen. Paul's yet-to-be-numbered sanctuary cities bill, as well as amendments submitted by Sens. Cotton and Vitter to the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015. These proposals, along with existing SAFE Act-type proposals to require state and local law enforcement to become immigration agents (such as H.R. 1148 and S. 1640), would threaten crucial federal law enforcement funding and undermine basic community policing principles. The Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force (LEITF) opposes these and similar proposals and urges Congress to reject them.

**We Oppose Proposals that Impose Federal Immigration Enforcement**

**Responsibilities on Local Law Enforcement**

As several of our members noted in a February 10, 2015, letter to the leadership of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security,

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.

Since DHS announced that it would be replacing the flawed Secure Communities program with the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP), many law enforcement agencies have been working with the federal government on implementation of the new program. Recognizing the need to tailor it to the needs of particular jurisdictions, DHS is in the process of reaching out to jurisdictions to build trust for the program and to ensure that it meets the needs of a particular jurisdiction. We must give this process some time to determine if it will provide a way for local law enforcement and DHS to work together to identify and remove dangerous individuals from our communities.

The current legislative proposals would undermine this process, compelling local law enforcement officers to act as immigration agents while imposing a federal "one-size-fits-all" approach. These approaches would reduce trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement, while imposing troubling federal mandates on law enforcement.

**We Oppose Proposals that Undermine Community Policing**

State and local law enforcement agencies work every day to build trusting relationships with residents, and need that trust to do our job: apprehend criminals and maintain public safety. All should feel safe in our communities and comfortable in reporting crimes, serving as witnesses, and calling for help in emergencies. This improves community policing and safety for everyone.

The legislative proposals described above pose real danger to existing relationships 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 fear that they, or people they know or depend upon, risk deportation by working with law enforcement. This fear undermines trust between law enforcement and the communities we serve, creating too much room for dangerous criminals and violent crime.

Rather than require state and local agencies to engage in additional immigration enforcement, Congress should focus on reforms to allow state and local law enforcement to focus resources on these very clear threats to safety: dangerous criminals, violent crime and criminal organizations.

**We Oppose Proposals that Threaten Crucial Law Enforcement Grants**

Our Task Force has consistently urged the federal government to ensure that state and local law enforcement have adequate resources. However, rather than provide additional resources to encourage better cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement, the "sanctuary cities" proposals actually threaten crucial existing funding resources. This approach is deeply problematic. Because some of these proposals specifically target major cities that have expressed concern with the well-known constitutional deficiencies with immigration detainers, several of our largest law enforcement agencies may lose critical funding that enables them to keep their streets safe.

**Conclusion**

We urge Congress to reject proposals that tie law enforcement funding to federal mandates to carry out immigration enforcement functions and to reject SAFE Act-style proposals that foist federal immigration enforcement on states and localities. Our immigration challenge is national and deserves a national approach, and we continue to recognize that what our broken system truly needs is a permanent legislative solution.

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