



**Ranking Member Peter Welch
Opening Remarks as Delivered**

**Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on The Constitution Hearing
“Protecting American Citizenship II: Federalism, Sanctuary Cities, and the Rule of
Law.”
March 25, 2026**

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the witnesses, and we've got tremendous witnesses here today on this incredibly important topic. I do agree with you that public safety is absolutely essential and comes first, and it's the first obligation of government. We've got some law enforcement people who are here and are going to be testifying about this so-called “sanctuary city” policy and how it weighs in.

You know, the assertion here is that the state and local law enforcement should be *assisting* in the immigration policy of the President, led by Stephen Miller. And that includes, right now, an approach towards mass round-ups. That assertion is wrong. Our local law enforcement agencies have an *extraordinary* responsibility to protect the citizens in the communities they serve. They are not there to be an adjunct to implement a policy of the president, particularly as to mass deportation.

We are in a situation here where we've made real progress. The border is secure. And, Mr. Chairman, don't tell the president I said this, but he deserves some credit for that—we're going to keep that on the down low. We also agree that we should be deporting violent criminals. That's there.

Where we are having a dispute is the policy implemented by ICE of mass deportation and round-ups. Number one, it's claimed that we're going after the worst of the worst. But only 14% of immigration arrests are for violent criminals. Instead, in order to meet what had been quotas—demanded by Mr. Miller—immigration agencies are raiding farms and factories, schools and hospitals.

This is wrong, and it doesn't make us more safe. In fact, it's creating difficulties for local law enforcement to *meet* their obligations to their own citizens. Our communities around the country are *reeling* from the harm of that, which is from my point of view—what we saw in Minneapolis—a rampage.

The Department of Homeland Security has really caused a lot of incredible harm, *avoidable harm*, in our communities. So, our law enforcement agencies, including in Vermont—we had an incident last week, or two weeks ago, where the ICE Agents from Boston came to Vermont to arrest a person. They did not notify local law enforcement. They didn't even notify Vermont ICE, and then got into a confrontation where local law enforcement really had to keep the peace.

There was *literally* no communication or cooperation from ICE. Our law enforcement folks were *shocked* at the lack of communication, which is such an essential component of how our law enforcement agencies work together to keep the peace. And of course, we saw it in Minneapolis. One of the police chiefs, or the police chief in Minneapolis, said: “We cannot let people in our communities think that our local law enforcement leadership is okay with actions that are not only wrong, but illegal.”

So, Mr. President, there's a question here. Local law enforcement has an obligation for local public safety. Their job is *not* to be an adjunct to ICE. That's not their job, and it's particularly difficult when we have an ICE that time and time again has overreached; has exceeded its authority; has acted in a way that demonstrates the lack of training.

A lot of us have been insisting that ICE have the same training and same obligations to their responsibilities as every law enforcement agency in this country has. It's a hard job, law enforcement. It takes aggression, it takes restraint. It takes judgement, it taken an immense amount of emotional self-control. We're all totally devoted to the people who protect us. But it's the job of the local law enforcement to protect the citizens in their communities.

And it is not just an abstraction, Mr. Chairman. As Justice Scalia and Justice Alito indicated, the Tenth Amendment guarantees that the federal government *cannot* force state and local governments to assist in enforcing federal law. This is about protecting the right of local communities to *protect* local communities. Our state and local law enforcement people have a strong and very valid interest in directing their own personnel and resources towards the issues their communities care about most.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to this hearing.

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