



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

October 26, 2015

The Honorable Lupe Valdez
Dallas County
133 North Industrial Boulevard, LB 31
Dallas, Texas 75207-4313

Dear Sheriff Valdez:

“Sanctuary City” policies like those promoted by your recent decision to implement your own case-by-case immigrant detention plan will no longer be tolerated in Texas. Your decision to not fully honor U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) requests to detain criminal immigrants poses a serious danger to Texans. These detainers provide ICE with the critical notice and time it needs to take incarcerated immigrants into federal custody.

Kate Steinle was brutally murdered last summer in San Francisco by an undocumented immigrant who was released by a local sheriff who refused to honor ICE’s detainer request. It is unacceptable for a Texas Sheriff to take a similarly dangerous path by departing from the strictest ICE standards. The ICE Director has forewarned that reduced cooperation from local governments – like Sheriffs – “may increase the risk that dangerous criminals are returned to the streets, putting the public and our officers at great risk.”

ICE immigration detainers request that your office provide federal immigration authorities an opportunity to collect and remove criminal aliens in your custody before they are released on Texas streets. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has declared that the purpose of the program you are unwilling to fully enforce is tailored for subjects related to “threats to national security, border security, and public safety,” including “aliens engaged in or suspected of terrorism or espionage.”

Your refusal to fully participate in a federal law enforcement program intended to keep dangerous criminals off the streets leaves the State no choice but to take whatever actions are necessary to protect our fellow Texans. Policies like yours compel Texas to take action to protect Texans’ safety and to reduce the costs that those policies may impose on Texas taxpayers.

At a minimum, Texas must pass laws that prohibit any policy or action like yours that promotes sanctuary to people in this state illegally. The State must also enact laws that make it illegal for a Sheriff’s Department to not honor a federal immigration detainer request. Texas must also evaluate the extent to which local taxpayers should foot the bill for local decisions that increase costs for our health and education systems. Further, the State should consider amending the Tort Claims Act to ensure counties are fully financially responsible for the actions of any illegal immigrants who are released because the county’s Sheriff failed to honor an ICE detainer request.

Now more than ever, it is essential that state, federal, and local law enforcement work collaboratively to protect our fellow Texans and to ensure that our laws are upheld, not disregarded.

Respectfully,

Greg Abbott
Governor