

The logo features a blue curved line above the text "Build Bridges Not Walls". "Build Bridges" is in a blue, textured, hand-drawn font, while "Not Walls" is in a clean, red, sans-serif font.

# Build Bridges Not Walls

Protect Immigrants | Spring Lobby Weekend | March 17-20, 2018 | Washington, DC

## Will “Enforcing Our Laws” Fix Our System?

It’s a pervasive myth that the U.S. immigration system is broken due to the federal government’s failure to enforce immigration laws, spend enough on enforcement, and adequately secure the U.S. border. In fact, enforcement spending has skyrocketed over the last 20 years – to the detriment of U.S. citizens and migrants alike – even as the number of undocumented immigrants in the nation has *increased*. Enforcement alone will neither fix the underlying problems with the U.S. immigration system nor create a system that puts at its center concern for the safety and value of each person affected by immigration.

### Unchecked Expansion of Immigration and Border Enforcement

The U.S. has continued to increase the funding and infrastructure for enforcement efforts without commensurate accountability measures to protect the communities it operates in.

- Since 1986, the federal government has spent an estimated **\$263 billion** on immigration enforcement.
- Since the Department of Homeland Security’s creation in 2003, the annual budget of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has **more than doubled, from \$9.2 billion to \$19.3 billion**.
- The number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents hired specifically to carry out deportations **nearly tripled** from 2003 to 2016, from 2,710 to 7,995.
- The number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents **nearly doubled from 1993 to 2016**, from 10,717 to a congressionally mandated 21,370.
- During the hiring surge between 2005 and 2012, there were over 2,000 arrests of CBP employees for misconduct – the equivalent of **1 arrest every day for 7 years**. Corruption charges include smuggling of immigrants, weapons, and drugs.
- An internal DHS advisory panel in 2016 recommended that CBP implement integrity and transparency improvements, and strengthen standards to **cut down on unauthorized use of force by agents**. These recommendations have yet to be addressed by Congress.
- Current bills propose to **lower hiring standards and waive polygraph testing** to meet President Trump’s requested personnel goals, which seek to expand the force by an **additional 25%**.

### Violating Human and Civil Rights

- Between 2010 and 2017, at least **55 people died** as a result of an encounter with CBP personnel.



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- CBP has recovered **7,209 bodies** of migrants who died while attempting to cross the southwestern border, **approximately one death per day since 1998**. The true number is likely higher; bodies recovered by local authorities are not counted, and many migrants disappear.
- A 2018 report by humanitarian workers cited instances of CBP personnel **destroying over 3,000 gallons of water** left for migrants traversing dangerous desert routes.
- Roughly **70% of immigrants in detention are mandatorily detained**, meaning their incarceration is required without any individual discretion.
- 73% of detained immigrants are housed in private, for-profit detention facilities.
- The Office of Inspector General cited **inhumane conditions at ICE detention facilities** including insufficient medical care, hygiene supplies, language access, and spoiled food in a 2017 report.
- **90% of asylum seekers without counsel** were denied asylum in FY 2016, compared with 48% of those with legal representation.

### **Does Immigration Enforcement Make Us Safer?**

- In 2017, **ICE doubled the number of “non-criminal” arrests**, meaning immigrants picked up had no prior engagement with the criminal justice system.
- Across New York State **immigration arrests at courthouses were up 900% in 2017**, 20% of the arrested immigrants had no prior criminal convictions.
- A 2017 survey found that 78% of immigrant survivors of trafficking, assault, or domestic violence reported to victims’ advocates and legal service providers that they have **concerns about contacting police, often citing fear of deportation**.

### **The Cost of Continuing Down the Current Path**

- In 2016, as the number of people crossing the border dropped, the amount spent by the Border Patrol per apprehension at the border increased to **more than \$8,760 per apprehension** (up from \$630 per apprehension in FY 2000).
- Mass deportation could amount to a cumulative **\$2.6 trillion loss in GDP over 10 years**, not including costs of deportation.
- **Taxpayers could save \$1.44 billion each year**—a nearly 80% decrease in detention spending—if alternatives to detention were more widely used.

### **Congress Needs to Fix an Unjust System**

Our immigration system is broken. The only approach Congress has enacted over the last decade has been to increase enforcement measures and, predictably, this approach has not worked. Increasing enforcement measures has perpetuated violations of civil and human rights, unnecessarily separated families, destabilized communities, and further entrenched an unjust system. FCNL aims to create an immigration system that makes our communities safer, recognizes the inherent worth of all individuals, addresses the root causes of migration, and aligns enforcement measures with humanitarian values. **For links to sources or to see this online visit: <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/1281>**

