

## Private prison to detain immigrants in Utah?

### About this issue

- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has expressed interest in [building a private prison within 180 miles of Salt Lake City](#).
- SLC is one of four “sanctuary cities” where ICE issued an RFI (Request for Information) to [identify possible sites](#).
- Private prisons have [many documented instances](#) of abuses, appalling conditions, and cost-cutting measures that place inmates at real risk of injury or death.
- The private prison industry donated millions of dollars to support President Trump’s campaign, and one company, GEO Group, recently [moved its annual conference to Trump’s golf club in Miami](#).
- Expanding the private prison system places human lives at risk, and threatens human and civil rights.
- ICE has a troubling reputation for its secrecy and lack of accountability; placing more people in detention means greater potential for abuse. For example, ICE routinely violates its own policies regarding detention of pregnant women, and detained at least 300 pregnant women during 2017.

### Talking Points

- Private prison system is expanding because of “pay-to-play” politics within the Trump Administration.
- Current backlog in immigration courts; non-criminal individuals will likely remain in detention for years for a civil offense.
- Many undocumented immigrants have U.S. citizen spouses and/or children experiencing emotional trauma and financial stress from having a loved one ripped away from them. These include Utah mothers like [Martha Peña](#), [Betty Ramos Castro](#), [Silvia Avelar-Flores](#), and [Maria Santiago Garcia](#), and many others who are afraid to come forward.
- Unauthorized southern border crossings have been on the decline for decades--at their lowest since the 1970s. The majority of the people that ICE has or wants to detain have been in the US for more than a decade, with family and community ties to US citizens – including 4 million US citizen children.
- Alternatives exist to incarceration, these include: parole, affordable bond, community-based support programs, and routine check-ins. These programs are much less costly to taxpayers than detention, preserve family unity, and show greater respect for the rights of US Citizen spouses and children.
- Taxpayers are ultimately responsible for most of the costs associated with private prisons, why incarcerate non-criminal individuals--who work and pay taxes--when significantly lower-cost, more humane and proven alternatives exist?

### How to impact this issue

**Write a letter to the editor covering one of these angles:**

- No funding for Trump’s deportation and detention force.
- Utah should not have corrupt, unethical detention centers created by presidential campaign donors.
- No private prisons or ICE detention in Utah.
- Community-based alternatives are better for everyone: US taxpayers, and US citizen spouses and children.
- What about the rights of US citizen spouses and children?

**Watch for future calls to action on this issue from Action Utah on our website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.**