

OVERSIGHT PROJECT

IT'S YOUR GOVERNMENT

Submitted Via: FOIA.GOV

May 7, 2026

Fernando Pineiro
FOIA Officer
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 12th St, SW, Stop 2009
Washington, D.C. 20536-5009

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear Mr. Pineiro:

Recently, the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) submitted its Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Justification to Congress.¹ In that document, ICE reported to Congress that it had returned or removed 442,637 aliens from the United States in FY 2025.² It further states that the goals for FY 2026 and FY 2027 are 1,000,000 returns and removals of aliens from the United States.³ I have reproduced the chart below for your reference.

Measure Name:	Total number of aliens returned and removed from the United States						
Description:	This measure counts the total number of aliens who are returned or removed from the United States by ICE ERO. It includes all returns and removals carried out by ERO during the reporting period and reflects the program’s effectiveness in enforcing immigration law by identifying, apprehending, processing, and removing aliens from the United States. The measure is calculated by summing all returns and removals of aliens within the specified timeframe and is used to evaluate ERO’s overall performance in enforcing immigration law.						
Fiscal Year:	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Targets:	---	---	---	120,000	175,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Results:	---	---	---	271,484	442,637	TBD	TBD
Explanation of Result:	In FY 2025, ICE returned or removed 442,637 aliens from the United States, far exceeding the target of 175,000 and marking a 63% increase over FY 2024. This increase was achieved by expanding flight operations, improving coordination with foreign governments, and streamlining processes to ensure timely and efficient removals. ICE has increased its future annual target to 1,000,000 returns and removals to reflect expanded operational capacity and ongoing commitment to enforcing immigration laws.						

¹ U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigr. And Customs Enf’t., *Budget Overview Fiscal Year 2027 Congressional Justification*, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2026-04/26_0403_ocfo_fy27-budget-immigration-and-customs-enforcement.pdf (last visited Apr. 15, 2026).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

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Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552, and the implementing FOIA regulations of the Department of Homeland Security, I respectfully request the following records from Immigration and Customs Enforcement:

Of the 442,637 aliens “returned or removed from the United States” in fiscal year 2025:

- a. The number of aliens returned; and
- b. The number of aliens removed.

Search Instructions

For any responsive documents, please include the entire communications chain, and all file attachments.

To further narrow down the scope of the request, requester does not seek correspondence that merely forwards press clippings, such as news accounts or opinion pieces, newsletters, and published or docketed materials, if that correspondence has no comment added by any party in the thread. For any responsive documents, please provide the entire communications chain, and all attachments. Please explicitly search all email inboxes assigned to the custodian, regardless of classification level (unclassified, secret, and top-secret inboxes).

The terms “pertaining to,” “referring,” “relating,” or “concerning” with respect to any given subject means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, reflects, identifies, states, refers to, deals with, or is in any manner whatsoever pertinent to that subject.

The term “record” means any written, recorded, or graphic matter of any nature whatsoever, regardless of how recorded, and whether original or copy, including, but not limited to, the following: memoranda, reports, expense reports, books, manuals, instructions, financial reports, working papers, records, notes, letters, notices, confirmations, telegrams, receipts, appraisals, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, prospectuses, inter-office and intra-office communications, electronic mail (emails), MMS or SMS text messages, instant messages, messaging systems (such as iMessage, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, Google Chat, Twitter direct messages, Lync, Slack, and Facebook Messenger), contracts, cables, telexes, notations of any type

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of conversation, telephone call, voicemail, meeting or other communication, bulletins, printed matter, computer printouts, teletypes, invoices, transcripts, diaries, analyses, returns, summaries, minutes, bills, accounts, estimates, projections, comparisons, messages, correspondence, press releases, circulars, financial statements, reviews, opinions, offers, studies and investigations, questionnaires and surveys, and work sheets (and all drafts, preliminary versions, alterations, modifications, revisions, changes, and amendments of any of the foregoing, as well as any attachments or appendices thereto), and graphic or oral records or representations of any kind (including without limitation, photographs, charts, graphs, microfiche, microfilm, videotape, recordings and motion pictures), and electronic, mechanical, and electronic records or representations of any kind (including, without limitation, tapes, cassettes, disks, and recordings) and other written, printed, typed, or other graphic or recorded matter of any kind or nature, however produced or reproduced, and whether preserved in writing, film, tape, disk, videotape or otherwise. A record bearing any notation not a part of the original text is to be considered a separate record. A draft or non-identical copy is a separate record within the meaning of this term. By definition a “communication” (as that term is defined herein) is also a “record” if the means of communication is any written, recorded, or graphic matter of any sort whatsoever, regardless of how recorded, and whether original or copy.

The terms “and” and “or” should be construed broadly and either conjunctively or disjunctively to bring within the scope of this request any information which might otherwise be construed to be outside its scope. The terms “all,” “any,” and “each” should each be construed as 'encompassing any and all. The singular includes the plural number, and vice versa. The present tense includes the past and vice versa. The masculine includes the feminine and neuter genders.

The term “communication” means each manner or means of disclosure or exchange of information (in the form of facts, ideas, inquiries, or otherwise), regardless of means utilized, whether oral, electronic, by document or otherwise, and whether in an in-person meeting, by telephone, facsimile, e-mail (desktop or mobile device), text message, MMS or SMS message, messaging systems (such as iMessage, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, Google Chat, Twitter direct messages, Lync, Slack, and Facebook Messenger), regular mail, telexes, releases, or otherwise.

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“Communications with,” “communications from,” and “communications between” means any communication involving the related parties, regardless of whether other persons were involved in the communication, and includes, but is not limited to, communications where one party is cc'd or bcc'd, both parties are cc'd or bcc'd, or some combination thereof.

Please consider all members of a document “family” to be responsive to the request if any single “member” of that “family” is responsive, regardless of whether the “family member” in question is “parent” or “child.”

In the interest of expediency and to minimize the research and/or duplication burden on your staff, please send records electronically if possible. If this is not possible, please notify me before sending to the mailing address listed below. If access to this request will take longer than twenty business days, please let me know when I might receive records or be able to inspect the requested records. Please produce responsive documents as soon as they become available. In all cases, please communicate with me at the below email address.

Please comply fully with 5 U.S.C. § 552(b). Accordingly, without limitation to the foregoing, if any portion of this request is denied for any reason, please provide written notice of the records or portions of records that are being withheld and cite each specific exemption of the Freedom of Information Act on which the agency relies. Moreover, to the extent that responsive records may be withheld in part produce all reasonably segregable portions of those records. Additionally, please provide all responsive documents even if they are redacted in full.

Fee Waiver Request

The Oversight Project requests a waiver of all fees associated with processing this request. Under the FOIA statute, fees will be waived if “disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii); *see also* 24 C.F.R. Part 15.106(k). This request meets both requirements for a fee waiver.

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The Oversight Project is a 501(c)(4) non-profit dedicated to critical examination of government actions. Given The Oversight Project's purpose and that this request is primarily and fundamentally for furthering that non-commercial purpose, a fee waiver is appropriate here because disclosure is likely to contribute to the public's understanding of government operations in a meaningful way.

The Oversight Project is a member of the Mass Deportations Coalition ("MDC").⁴ The MDC is a coalition of immigration law and policy experts, former senior and rank and file law enforcement officials, advocates, and supporters who support President Trump's promise to conduct the largest deportation operation in American history.⁵ The MDC is united on five core principles, including the importance of the public receiving an unambiguous and transparent understanding of data surrounding immigration enforcement.⁶ We recently published a Playbook on how the Administration could operationalize and perform a true mass deportation operation.⁷ The release of the Playbook received widespread media attention.⁸

In our addition to our work in MDS, the Oversight Project uses the information requested and analyzes it in order to educate the public through the creation and distribution of unique editorial content on social media⁹, and its website.¹⁰ Examples of this content include distribution of records and analysis of President Joseph R. Biden's use of autopens;¹¹ distribution of records and analysis of the Small Business Administration's implementation of Executive Order 14019;¹² and distribution of records

⁴ See, Mass Deportations Coalition, *Coalition Partners*, <https://massdeportationcoalition.org/#coalition-partners> (last visited Apr. 15, 2026).

⁵ Mass Deportation Coalition, *Purpose*, <https://massdeportationcoalition.org/#purpose> (last visited Apr. 15, 2026).

⁶ Mass Deportation Coalition, *Principles*, <https://massdeportationcoalition.org/#principles> (last visited Apr. 15, 2026).

⁷ Mass Deportation Coalition, *Playbook*, <https://massdeportationcoalition.org/playbook/> (Mar. 30, 2026).

⁸ See, e.g., Samuel Benson, *Trump's MAGA allies have a new plan for mass deportations. It could splinter the coalition*, Politico (Apr. 1, 2026), <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/04/01/trump-maga-immigration-raids-worksites-00853334>; Brittany Gibson, *MAGA allies say Trump is going soft on deportations*, Axios (Apr. 13, 2026) <https://www.axios.com/2026/04/13/republicans-trump-immigration-mass-deportations>.

⁹ Oversight Project (@ItsYourGov), X, <https://x.com/ItsYourGov> (last visited Apr 9, 2026).

¹⁰ Oversight Project - It's Your Government, Oversight Project, <https://itsyourgov.org/> (last visited Apr. 9, 2026).

¹¹ *Trump Reacts to Autopen Controversy*, Oversight Project (Mar. 13, 2025), <https://itsyourgov.org/trump-reacts-to-autopen-controversy/> (last visited Apr 2, 2025).

¹² *Oversight Project Exposes Biden Administration's Attempts to Mobilize Federal Resources to Juice*

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and analysis of false statements made by former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas regarding now-debunked allegations that Customs and Border Protection agents whipped migrants crossing the Rio Grande River.¹³ In addition to the work published on our website and social media, employees of The Oversight Project regularly contribute to other traditional and non-traditional media.¹⁴

As the foregoing demonstrates, The Oversight Project qualifies for a fee waiver. If, however, you deny this request for a fee waiver, please advise me in advance of the estimated charges exceeding \$50. Please send me a detailed and itemized explanation of those charges.

Thank you in advance for considering my request. If you have any questions, or feel you need clarification of this request please contact me at foia@itsyourgov.org.

Sincerely,

Mike Howell
President
The Oversight Project
211 North Union Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Democratic Turnout in Michigan, Oversight Project (May 15, 2024), <https://itsyourgov.org/litigation/oversight-project-exposes-biden-administrations-attempts-to-mobilize-federal-resources-to-juice-democratic-turnout-in-michigan/> (last visited Apr. 2, 2025).

¹³ *Oversight Project Exposes Secretary Mayorkas Lied about CBP Agents "Whipping" Migrants in Del Rio, TX*, Oversight Project (Oct. 12, 2022), <https://itsyourgov.org/litigation/oversight-project-exposes-secretary-mayorkas-lied-about-cbp-agents-whipping-migrants-in-del-rio-tx/> (last visited Apr. 2, 2025).

¹⁴ N.P.R. Staff, *TRANSCRIPT: NPR's Interview with the Heritage Foundation's Oversight Project*, National Public Radio, May 10, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/05/10/1250252668/transcript-npr-interview-heritage-foundation-oversight-project> (last visited Apr 2, 2025); Tony Perkins, *Kyle Brosnan Identifies how Biden's Staff May Have Abused the Autopen*, YouTube (Mar. 17, 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay6li3qEmYI> (last visited Apr 2, 2025).