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Policy Brief: Mass Worksite Enforcement Harms U.S. Economy and Communities

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On September 4, 2025, federal law enforcement agents arrested nearly 500 individuals—mostly Korean nationals—at a [Hyundai factory](#) in Georgia, carrying out the largest single-worksite immigration raid [ever](#). This incident, taken alone, raises grave concerns regarding [U.S. foreign relations](#), [local economic growth](#), and the future [targeting](#) of businesses. Viewed in concert with the immense uptick in worksite enforcement carried out since January 2025,¹ it is part of a troubling pattern of prioritizing indiscriminate and aggressive worksite enforcement tactics, including the [targeting](#) of businesses. These policies bring instability for U.S. employers and their employees, damage the national economy, and will wreak havoc on local communities by stalling [local economic growth](#).

By creating a culture of fear, indiscriminate worksite enforcement measures result in economic harm.

The Administration's surge in worksite enforcement actions across the country is part of a disturbing pattern: an immigration enforcement system focused on instilling fear than on upholding the law. ICE leans into and creates the public image of fear by being [vocal](#) about its increased focus on worksite immigration raids throughout the current Trump Administration, often boasting about them in their alerts, press releases, and social media. Photos on ICE's website show worksite enforcement agents wearing tactical gear such as ballistics vests and with firearms and face masks.

There is also a disturbing trend of unidentified agents conducting enforcement outside of worksites, with masked, unidentified agents arresting and detaining workers. This trend, which has been reported by AILA's membership, is likely to intensify given the Supreme Court's [ruling](#) allowing federal agents in Los Angeles to target individuals for simply going to work at sites such as farms, carwashes, and construction sites. Such tactics have set businesses on edge, as they are left with disruptions to their operations and a fearful workforce.

¹ Included are worksite enforcement actions in Alabama, where ICE arrested [53](#) people, Florida where ICE arrested [33](#) people at one location and over [100](#) at another location, Louisiana at a construction site where they arrested [15](#) people, Massachusetts where they arrested [11](#) people working at a roofing business, [Pennsylvania](#), as well as [Puerto Rico](#), [South Dakota](#), and [Texas](#).

The impact this culture of fear has on employees is already clearly demonstrated in our workforce. Aggressive enforcement tactics at worksites create chronic labor shortages for businesses and stifle [growth](#) in local communities. Employees, [afraid of ICE raids](#), stop showing up to work. The agricultural industry [reported](#) “that up to 70 percent of workers” stopped reporting to work, leading to [crops rotting](#). AILA member reports involved enforcement actions that disrupted the agriculture & dairy industry, food processing industry, restaurants and hospitality industry, all of which are integral to the national and local economy. The resulting labor shortages due to are likely to cause widespread increases in the [prices](#) of goods and services across the country, further compounding the economic impact.

Reports highlight some overzealous and legally questionable tactics employed by ICE in worksite enforcement. For example, some AILA member reports involved “knock and talk” entries at worksites, where ICE officers sought consent from employers under pressure. Other reports included a “[hot pursuit](#)” entry, in which agents enter private property without a warrant, or the use of [administrative warrants](#) to arrest individuals before they enter their place of work, since ICE must have a judicial warrant to enter private areas of businesses.

The Trump Administration amplified this impact by injecting instability and confusion for employers and employees by flip-flopping on protections for certain industries. In seeming recognition of the impact the fear of immigrant workers to the agriculture and hospitality industries, the Administration [ordered](#) ICE officials to pause raids and arrests in the agriculture and hospitality industry. Four days later, ICE issued a new directive [pushing](#) agents to ramp up enforcement efforts, including at worksites in those industries.

This conflicting messaging has left business confused and made it clear that there are no guarantees that any sector is off-limits.

The Administration’s inconsistent policy decisions make it all but impossible for employers to follow the law.

While worksite inspections have long been commonplace, these inspections are becoming more fraught for employers and employees due to the difficulty for employers to navigate a rapidly changing compliance environment, which is compounded by the Administration’s very public worksite enforcement measures. Employers can face [civil penalties and criminal charges](#) for not being in compliance, and ICE agents may [detain](#) workers and transport them to other locations. The difficulty employers face in following the law harms businesses by costing them more resources to navigate the government red tape and ensure compliance with the law when the law changes day to day.

The complex compliance scene is demonstrated in the decisions of the Administration to end parole or Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for a number of countries without adequate guidance or notice to employers. This led to significant confusion among businesses about the validity of hundreds of thousands of employment authorization documents (EADs), which places businesses at heightened risk of non-compliance and negative outcomes from worksite raids.

- Terminating Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for several countries. This year alone, the Administration terminated TPS status and associated work authorization for individuals from Haiti, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Cameroon, and Syria. Under statute, any decision to terminate or extend TPS must be published at least [60 days](#) prior to the expiration date. If no decision is made by the 60-day deadline, the TPS designation is meant to auto-extend for another 6 months. DHS has repeatedly ignored this statute by publishing notices to terminate far beyond the 60-day deadline for most TPS designations. Delayed termination notices leave TPS holders and their employers confused and with little time to adjust.
- Revoking the humanitarian parole for hundreds of thousands of immigrants living legally in the United States under the Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan parole program (CHNV) on March 25, 2025. By early April, parolees began receiving letters notifying them that their authorization to stay in the U.S. and work legally was being rescinded immediately.

Beyond the immediate policy actions, agencies provide limited to no guidance on employment verification compliance for employers. Combined with the subsequent litigation, employers and employees are forced to perform mental gymnastics to understand implications on work authorization validity. Amid the legal uncertainty, advocates, employers, and employees who are trying to remain compliant must deal with administrative burdens of interpreting court rulings and create contingency plans for compliance and impacts on their businesses.

Businesses must spend significant time and effort trying to avoid potential violations, without certainty that their compliance actions are sufficient, creating undue stress and strain on their operations. Increased enforcement actions lead to business disruption and reduced productivity, labor market instability due to a loss of skilled labor and increased turnover costs, and a negative impact on local economies for regions with high immigrant populations.

Additionally, employers are also under fire for lawfully employing H-1B visa holders. The H-1B visa program enables American businesses to tap into global talent, and involves a vetting process that collects significant fees, ensures against fraud, and determines that U.S. workers are not being harmed. H-1B visa holders [contribute](#) significantly to economic growth and innovation and help businesses compete globally. The Department of Labor's [Project Firewall](#), along with [letters](#) sent by Senator Chuck Grassley and Senator Dick Durbin, seek to investigate employers who employ H-1B holders. Not only do these actions undermine the impact of [AI programming tools](#) on employment of STEM professionals, they place undue burden on businesses and employees who have been properly vetted and lawfully employed.

Continued restrictions and the elimination of work authorization for certain immigrant populations, as well as the three-fold increase in ICE's annual budget approved by the [One Big Beautiful Bill Act](#) (OBBBA), will only result in more enforcement actions as well as instability and fear. The magnitude of the budget increase signals a policy shift toward aggressive

enforcement, with the likely consequences including a sharp expansion of the Administration's worksite enforcement, detention, and removal goals, which targets hard-working individuals and businesses that positively contribute to the local and national economy.

Restore Due Process and Accountability in Worksite Immigration Enforcement

The current federal approach to worksite immigration enforcement undermines constitutional protections and due process. Rather than promoting lawful compliance, it has been implemented in ways that instill fear, disrupt communities, and disregard legal norms. [Reports](#) from news outlets have documented excessive use of force during enforcement actions by using tactics that are disproportionate to the nature of worksite violations.

AILA affirms the government's authority to hold bad actors accountable. However, worksite enforcement must be conducted with transparency, predictability, and minimal disruption to lawful business operations and surrounding communities. We therefore propose the following policy recommendations:

- Respect legal processes: Enforcement actions should be preceded by appropriate notice and conducted in a manner that respects due process and legal compliance.
- Minimize disruption: Operations must be the least disruptive to employers and their workforce, especially in sensitive locations such as schools, hospitals, and places of worship.
- Target real threats: Enforcement should focus on individuals who pose genuine threats to national security or public safety—not on indiscriminate mass actions.
- Ensure predictability and simplicity: Employers must be able to anticipate enforcement procedures and adjust accordingly. Protocols should be straightforward and consistently applied.
- Clear and timely guidance: Employers require such guidance to properly comply and to protect both their operations and employees in advance of enforcement.

A reformed enforcement strategy must align with constitutional values, protect community stability, and prioritize public safety over spectacle.

Conclusion

Mass worksite raids are not about national security or public safety; they are about maximizing arrests and removals at any cost to meet an arbitrary quota. These raids do not target the “worst of the worst,” but rather hard-working individuals who positively contribute to our community and economy. ICE's worksite actions deploy fear as a weapon against people with families, who have built community ties, and who have likely never been convicted of a violent crime. Fear of worksite raids drive immigrant workers deeper into the shadows and discourage reports of abuse and exploitation. This is not enforcement, but rather intimidation, and undermines the very rule of law ICE purports to uphold.