

The Deportation Nightmare Begins



PAUL KRUGMAN



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This is how it begins.

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Whatever Trump intends, this will spiral out of control



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For the moment, financial markets seem to believe that when it comes to tariffs, Trump won't follow through on most of what he's been threatening. I think this is excessively complacent. If you think that Trump's economic advisers will convince him

that slapping high tariffs on our neighbors is a really bad idea, you haven't been paying attention: Trump has surrounded himself with [sycophants](#) who won't even consider telling him that he's wrong.

I guess we'll see. But when it comes to the crackdown on immigrants, we're already seeing the first evidence that the administration's bite will be worse than its bark.

Trump officials have at various points tried to suggest that the deportation efforts will be limited, that at least initially they will only go after [criminals](#), And some Trump apologists were suggesting [just days ago](#) that the administration wouldn't really take actions that would seriously affect the agricultural work force, which includes many undocumented immigrants. Thus Chad Wolf of the America First Policy Institute told [Politico](#),

If there's 16 workplace raids in agriculture over the course of two months, then yeah, let's, let's start talking about how [the economic impact] may be a concern. But I think until there's actually facts there, I think it's a little overblown.

Well, I think the facts are already there.

The thing is, I don't believe that Trump could pursue a limited, restrained crackdown on immigrants even if he wanted to. If you incessantly make the false claim that millions of criminal migrants are fueling a vast crime wave, if you make it clear that respecting the rights of the accused is a liberal, DEI thing, *of course* some ICE and Border Control agents will run wild. Basically, anyone with brown skin will be at risk of at least temporary detention.

And if you want to think about both the humanitarian and the economic impact of the crackdown, you shouldn't focus too much on the logistics — on the fact that the Trump administration doesn't have remotely enough resources to deport millions of U.S. residents or put them in ~~concentration camps~~ [holding facilities](#) [insert latest euphemism]. The number of immigrants arrested may be small so far, but the raids are

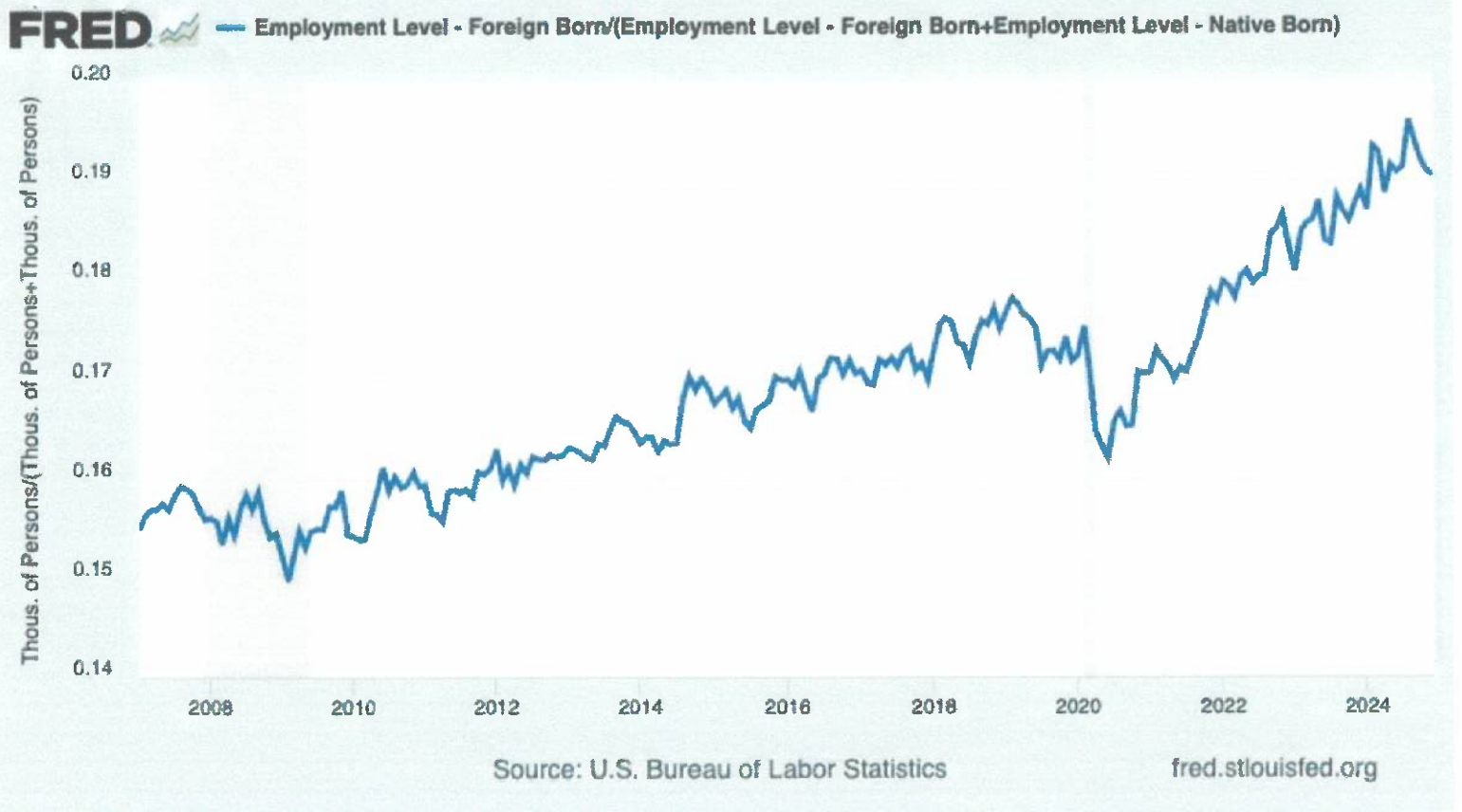
already inspiring widespread fear. And this fear will have major consequences, with workers staying home or, if they can, going back to their home countries, with businesses laying off valuable employees for fear that they may be raided.

Let me make a further prediction that I hope turns out to be wrong: As the official immigrant crackdown ramps up, we're also going to see a lot of vigilantism. Some of this may take the form of [swatting](#), reports to ICE that such and such a business or gathering place is full of migrant criminals. Some of it will take the form of direct action; remember when the [Guardian Angels](#) roughed up a "migrant" (actually a New Yorker) in Times Square? Expect to see much more of that.

All of this will be ugly and scary. America may very quickly become a nation in which everyone — or at least every nonwhite — feels the need to carry proof of legal residence with them wherever they go, and even having the right papers may not protect you from detention or vigilante violence.

Given all this, it seems almost crass to talk about the economic impact. But it will be large.

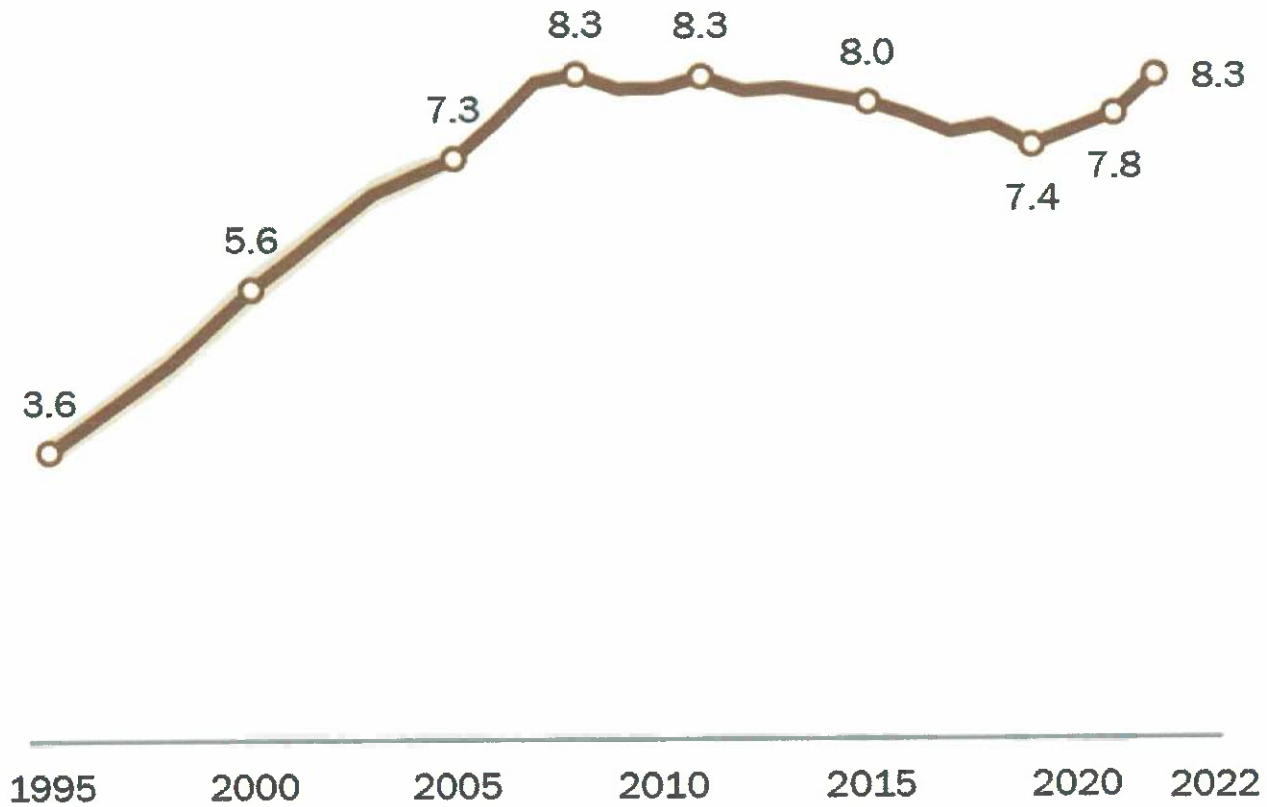
At this point, almost 1 in 5 U.S. workers is foreign-born:



Most of these workers are here legally, although as we're already seeing, that may not be as much protection as you think. Most estimates suggest that unauthorized immigrants make up around 5 percent of the work force:

The number of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. workforce grew rapidly from 2019 to 2022

Unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. who are working or looking for work, in millions

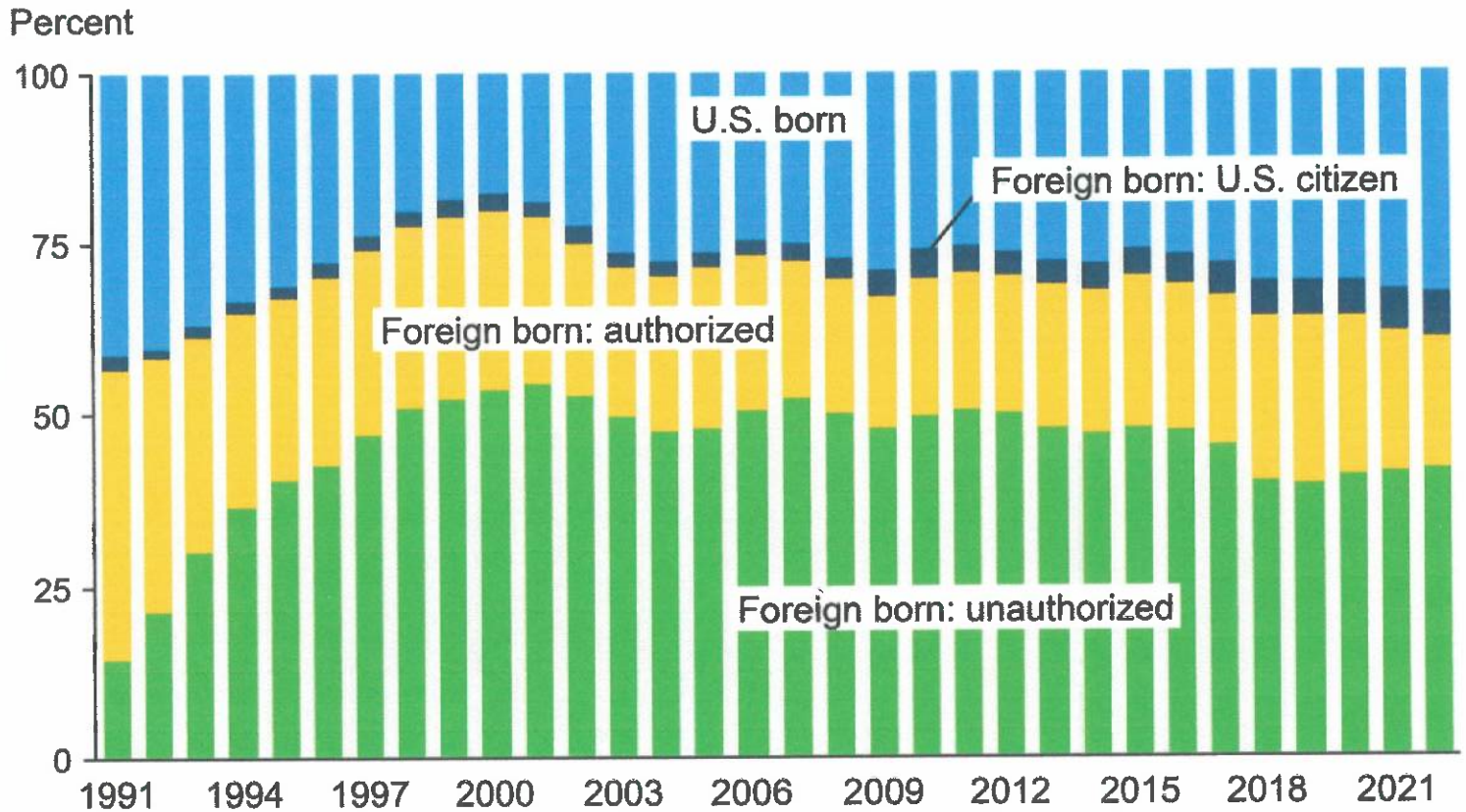


Source: Pew

Losing a large fraction of these workers would be a serious blow to the economy, especially because immigrants, legal and not, play a much bigger role in some industries and occupations than they do in the economy as a whole.

Agriculture is the most striking example: Immigrants — many of them undocumented — make up most of the farm labor force:

Legal status of hired crop farmworkers, fiscal 1991–2022



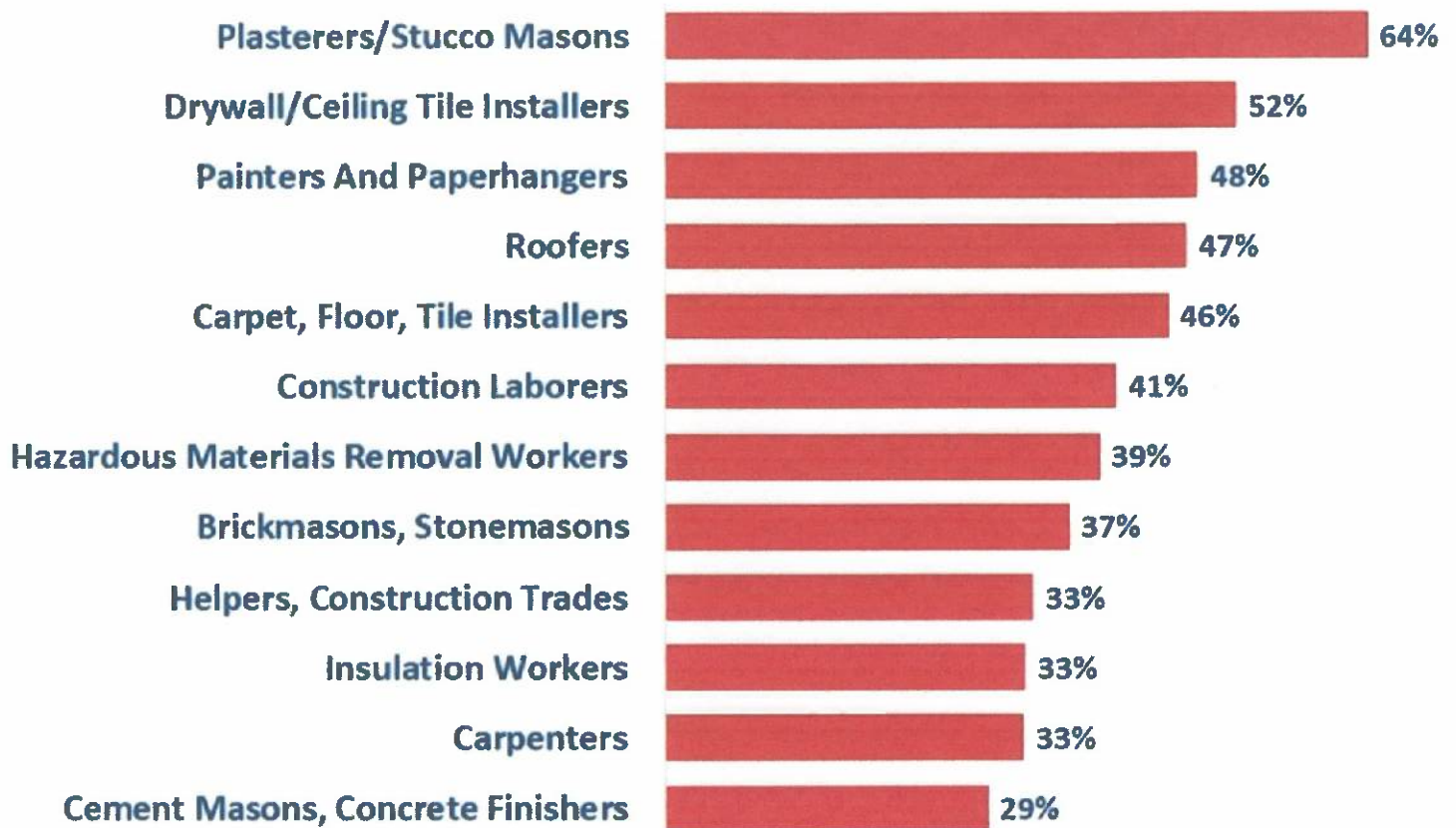
Source: USDA

Push those workers out, either by actual deportation or detention or simply by creating a climate of fear, and just watch what happens to grocery prices.

About a quarter of construction industry employees are immigrants — 40 percent in Texas and California — but this number [rises to 31 percent](#) if you look only at “construction trades,” i.e., people who actually build stuff as opposed to working in offices or marketing. And the immigrant share is much higher in particular trades:

Construction Trades Most Reliant on Immigrants

Share of Immigrants in Labor Force, 2022



Source: American Community Survey PUMS, 2022, NAHB Estimates

Source: National Association of Homebuilders

So at a time when Americans are still angry about the price of groceries and, with more justification, about the unaffordability of housing, Trump's immigrant crackdown seems set to hobble food production and home construction.

Yet I don't think he can dial it back. He can call off his tariffs, claiming to have won big concessions from Canada and Mexico, or grant tariff exemptions to his friends, turning them into one more instrument of corruption. But his screeds against immigrants have, I believed, unleashed forces of hatred that he can't rein in. And these forces will make America poorer as well as uglier.

Schools brace for immigration arrests, try to reassure terrified parents

Schools try to calm parents' fears and keep their kids in school after Trump eases the way for immigration enforcement at schools.

Updated January 23, 2025

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By [Laura Meckler](#), [Kim Bellware](#) and [Hannah Natanson](#)

School leaders across the country are working to reassure immigrant families that it is safe to send their children to school amid growing fears that the Trump administration will target undocumented immigrants on school grounds.

Anxiety in many cities was already thick over President Donald Trump's promise to deport millions of immigrants who are in the country illegally. Then this week, the Trump administration reversed more than a decade of policy, saying it will no longer direct immigration agents to avoid "sensitive locations," including schools, hospitals and churches.

Fearful that some parents will keep their children at home, many districts are pushing out information about local rules that aim to counter or at least mitigate federal policies. Some are stressing, for instance, that their district will insist that Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents show a judicial warrant before being given access to school property or information. ICE routinely obtains judicial warrants when it is also investigating a crime, experts say, but agents are unlikely to have them during routine immigration enforcement operations.

Immigration enforcement at schools has been rare, experts and school officials say. Nonetheless, the swirl of news that has accompanied Trump's first week in office has some parents worried that a routine visit to their children's school could end in deportation

How Donald Trump's deportation crackdown could unfold

The Washington Post examined which groups of immigrants could be at higher risk of deportation under the second Trump administration, and what logistical and financial obstacles stand in the way.

"I am scared I will go to pick up my children, and they will be there taking parents from the schools," an undocumented Guatemalan mother of two who lives in Los Angeles said in an interview.

The mother, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to protect her family, is working with Our Voice, a local group helping immigrant families navigate this difficult moment. She said she is asking family members if they can take charge of her children, should she be deported. And she said she will keep her family at home the moment she hears that immigration enforcement agents have been sighted anywhere near the schools or churches in her community.

Evelyn Aleman, founder of Our Voice, said that fear is common and will be felt in schools. "Kids will be coming home or waiting at school for parents," she said, but they will be gone.

School leaders say they worry that this sort of thinking could lead to days or weeks of missed school, which would be damaging for children, both socially and academically.

There's "a whole bunch of kids where their only chance in life is to get a great education," former education secretary Arne Duncan, a Democrat, said at an event this week hosted by the Brookings Institution. If "because of the fear and the hatred their parents decide to keep them safe and not send them to school — devastating consequences."

The Migration Policy Institute, a think tank, estimates there are 733,000 school-aged undocumented children living in the United States, and many more who were born here but whose parents are unauthorized. Children in the United States have been legally entitled to a free education regardless of their immigration status since the 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe*.

School leaders said this week that they are trying to reassure their communities and educate their staff about school policies, including directing them to alert the central office if an immigration officer shows up.

"I'm trying to make sure parents know that the safest place for their children is our schools," said Pedro Martinez, CEO of the Chicago Public Schools. In the days before the inauguration, there were news reports that the Trump

administration planned to immediately launch immigration enforcement raids in Chicago, which heightened fears even more, though such raids have not yet occurred.

Martinez said that his district began sending information to families in eight different languages ahead of the inauguration and has been partnering with advocacy groups to make sure that parents know their rights if they encounter an immigration agent. Groups are also helping parents make plans for their children if they are deported. “It’s easy to be afraid. They are going to be more afraid if they don’t have information,” he said.

Trump presidency

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The influential Chicago Teachers Union also has held a series of “Sanctuary Schools” staff trainings on how to respond if immigration agents show up at school. Some 250 staffers have participated, including counselors, clerks and teachers who are crafting safety plans and checklists should ICE agents come to a school, said Linda Perales, a former bilingual special education teacher with the union who is now an organizer leading the trainings.

“The sense I’ve gotten from members is: ‘I can’t believe we’re here again’ — and at the same time — ‘I can believe it,’” Perales said. “Teachers are tired, but also very ready to organize and protect students.”

In Los Angeles, the school board approved [a resolution](#) soon after the presidential election promising to do everything in its power to “protect and defend students, families and staff” from harm that may be caused by the new administration.

A spokesperson said this week that the district has had a policy since 2017 of not voluntarily cooperating with federal immigration enforcement and the district had begun mandatory training for staff in how to respond if federal immigration officers appear. It also has published [detailed instructions](#) to help staff in such situations, including a directive to not cooperate absent exigent circumstances such as imminent risk of death or violence and fresh pursuit of a dangerous felon. It also has produced “know your rights” cards to distribute to students with instructions about how to respond if they are approached by an agent and [published resource guides](#) for families online.

And on Wednesday, an advisory and oversight panel for New York City schools unanimously approved [a resolution](#)

denying ICE access to school facilities, students and student records, absent exigent circumstances or a judicial warrant. The district, it said, “will continue to welcome all students, staff, and their families regardless of immigration status.”

AASA, the national group for school superintendents, gives its members similar advice. Tara Thomas, government affairs manager for the group, said schools must allow ICE agents access if they have a judicial warrant. Schools are not required to allow agents into a building if they have the more common administrative warrants, but the group advises districts to decide for themselves whether to cooperate in these cases.

Still, not all education leaders are pushing back against stepped-up enforcement. Ryan Walters, schools superintendent for Oklahoma, recently proposed that his state’s schools check students’ immigration status. This week, he said that stepped-up immigration enforcement will help the state “get our schools back.”

“President Donald Trump is ending sanctuary schools in Oklahoma,” Walters said in an emailed response to questions. “We will cooperate with all of President Trump’s policies to enforce immigration.”

Since 2011, ICE has adhered to a “sensitive locations” policy, which, with some exceptions, has required agents to obtain special approval for enforcement actions in certain places. Initially that list included schools from preschool through college; hospitals; churches and other places of worship; sites of funerals, weddings and other religious ceremonies, and public demonstrations such as marches, rallies and parades. In 2021, that list was expanded to include other health-care facilities, playgrounds, social service facilities and emergency response sites.

On Monday, Trump’s first day in office, the Department of Homeland Security rescinded the policy effective immediately. “Going forward, law enforcement officers should continue to use ... discretion along with a healthy dose of common sense,” wrote Benjamin C. Huffman, acting DHS secretary. “It is not necessary, however, for the head of the agency to create bright line rules regarding where our immigration laws are permitted to be enforced.”

The new rules do not mean that ICE is going to start routinely making arrests at schools and hospitals, said Corey Price, who retired recently as head of ICE’s Enforcement and Removal Operations branch. He said he sees the change as necessary to counter a situation where, for instance, someone wanted for deportation is holed up inside a church.

Price, who worked at ICE for more than 20 years, said he cannot recall an enforcement action at a school and doubts that ICE will want to conduct them there. Agents do not like to conduct operations where there are a lot of people present because it is less safe for everyone involved, he said. Still, he said, agents might go to a school if that was the only way to locate and arrest someone targeted for deportation.

He added that ICE agents use administrative warrants — signed by someone inside ICE — not judicial warrants for routine deportations. Judicial warrants are needed, he argued, only if an arrest is part of a criminal investigation. He added that ICE officers are allowed to operate anywhere that is open to the public. School buildings, however, are not open to members of the public and ICE may not be able to insist on access, absent a judicial warrant, if school officials resist, he said.

Still, if outdoor areas or sidewalks near schools are open to the public, it would be easier for ICE to operate there without a warrant.

Others agreed that operations at schools are rare and are skeptical that will change, even with the sensitive locations guidance gone.

“They’re interested in carrying out their jobs in the most efficient ways. I’m not sure that would lead them to schools or churches,” said Julia Gelatt, an immigration expert at the Migration Policy Institute. She said that in rare cases, though, it might make sense and that “they don’t want to be constrained.”

But beyond operations, Gelatt said, the announcement this week may have been meant to ramp up fears. “The Trump administration is trying to send a very clear message that people in the country without authorization should feel scared,” she said.

A spokesperson for DHS did not immediately respond to a question about whether the policy is meant to send this message.

There may be a few “showplace raids,” where agents swoop in to nab someone near a school, predicted Michael Lukens, executive director of the Amica Center for Immigrant Rights, a nonprofit that offers legal representation across the D.C. region to adult and child immigrants placed in detention.

“That’ll stoke fear in the community,” Lukens said. “This is about trying to take away some of the last places that people can feel safe.”

He also predicted lawsuits will challenge the revocation of the sensitive locations guidance, some based on the Supreme Court ruling that all children are entitled to attend public schools. Lukens said advocates can make the case that this right is endangered by the new policy.

In Chicago, some undocumented parents are creating plans for their U.S. citizen neighbors to take their children to school if immigration raids are reported, said Jazmin Cerda, who works with about 75 parent leaders across nine community schools in predominantly Latino and immigrant Chicago neighborhoods through the nonprofit Brighton Park Neighborhood Council. She said others are trying to figure out how to arrange guardianship for their minor children.

“It’s sad to say but — I don’t want to say they’re giving up — but their hope of not being detained is very minimal,” Cerda said of immigrant families.

“You give birth to your children,” she added. “You never [think] you’ll have to plan to give them away because of immigration.”