

**ACLU**  
Louisiana

# YEAR ONE

**IMMIGRANT DETENTION IN LOUISIANA  
UNDER THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION**

**NATIONAL  
IMMIGRATION  
PROJECT**

Lawyers for the Movement



**ROBERT & ETHEL  
KENNEDY  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
CENTER**

# Year One: *Immigrant Detention in Louisiana Under The Trump Administration*

**AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF LOUISIANA**

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# OVERVIEW

In 2024, Inside the Black Hole detailed first-hand accounts of the conditions immigrants face in civil detention in the New Orleans U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Field Office (NOLA ICE) area of responsibility.<sup>[1]</sup> Since that report, conditions in Louisiana’s immigration jails have only worsened. The first 365 days of the Trump administration supercharged existing immigration operations in Louisiana. Average daily detention increased nationally from 39,009 on January 21, the day after the inauguration, to 61,416 as of November 10, 2025. In Louisiana, average daily detention increased from 6,851 people in detention on January 21 to a peak of 8,137 people on November 10, 2025, or approximately 13% of immigrants detained nationwide.<sup>[2]</sup>

This explosion in detention can be traced to decisions and policy changes made by the administration. For example, the Trump administration’s targeting of graduate students for their speech made national headlines, and resulted in their detention in Louisiana.<sup>[3]</sup> In July 2025, the Trump administration issued an internal policy that contradicts the plain language and context of the immigration statutes, congressional understanding, and decades of agency understanding and practice to declare that all individuals who entered the United States without inspection at any time are subject to mandatory detention.<sup>[4]</sup> As the Trump administration began its mass detention program, people from around the country found themselves arrested by immigration officials and detained in Louisiana. These included longtime Louisiana residents<sup>[5]</sup>; asylum seekers arrested at immigration court hearings<sup>[6]</sup>; and individuals arrested by chance as part of a collateral arrest.<sup>[7]</sup> Each found themselves quickly spirited to detention in rural Louisiana.

At the same time, other existing policies were rejected or outright ignored to support drastic increases in immigrant detention. Congressional oversight found that the Trump administration detained large numbers of pregnant women from around the country, placing them at severe medical risk in a complete about-face from past practice and ICE policy.<sup>[8]</sup> Advocates noted that the government’s own directives prohibit detaining pregnant women, except in exceptional circumstances.<sup>[9]</sup>

To increase immigration detention capacity, the Trump administration selected several sites in Louisiana for expansion. In September 2025, the Department of Homeland Security announced a new partnership with the state government to retrofit a formerly condemned dormitory that was colloquially called "the dungeon" for its inhumane and solitary confinement conditions into an immigration detention center at Louisiana State Penitentiary, commonly known as “Angola.”<sup>[10]</sup> A former slave labor camp, Angola has long stood for the most deadly forms of incarceration, recently referred to as “Hell on Earth.”<sup>[11]</sup>

# OVERVIEW

The detention center at Angola, formally known as Louisiana ICE Processing Center but colloquially referred to as “Louisiana Lockup” or “Camp 57,” houses approximately 180 individuals daily, with capacity to more than double that number. Reports from the facility immediately highlighted substandard care, with a total lack of medical support, failure to provide adequate hygiene or medications, and a lack of potable water.<sup>[12]</sup> Multiple individuals in the facility went on hunger strike to protest these conditions.<sup>[13]</sup>

Beginning on December 3, 2025, the Trump administration launched “Operation Catahoula Crunch,” an effort that sent 250 federal agents to raid the greater New Orleans area and arrest 5,000 people.<sup>[14]</sup> The operation came on the heels of similar efforts in Charlotte, North Carolina; Chicago, Illinois; and New York, New York, with federal judges finding constitutional violations in some of their operations.<sup>[15]</sup> Videos circulated online of officers pointing rifles at roof repairmen.<sup>[16]</sup> Officers raided big box stores such as Home Depot and Lowe’s, along with targeted sweeps of Kenner, Louisiana, a suburb of New Orleans with a high Latino population. Many people stopped leaving their homes as they feared being caught in ICE’s indiscriminate arrests.<sup>[17]</sup> Churches and religious centers excused attendance or closed to mitigate the impacts on their parishioners.<sup>[18]</sup> Community organizers worked daily to provide Know Your Rights trainings to members of the community, to ensure that as many people as possible understood the constitutional limits of DHS’ authority.<sup>[19]</sup>

The immigrant arrest operation’s efforts were greatly assisted by Louisiana’s existing detention center network and existing 287(g) agreements.<sup>[20]</sup> As a state, Louisiana has the second-highest number of immigrants detained at any moment, behind only Texas. It also has the Alexandria Staging Facility, housed at the Alexandria International Airport and the only detention center of its kind in the country. Central to the Trump administration’s deportation plans, the ASF is used to rapidly remove individuals to countries around the world, particularly to Latin America.<sup>[21]</sup> Thus, the mass arrest campaign in Louisiana had an existing structure to detain and, relatedly, to quickly remove people to either their countries of origin or to third countries.

As the Trump administration completes its first year, immigrant detention in Louisiana is in a state of emergency. Conditions remain poor, and the number of people in immigrant detention has only worsened those conditions in light of the overcrowding.

# BACKGROUND

**Inside the Black Hole**, published in August 2024, was a collaboration between the Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center, the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Immigration Project, and Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy, among others. It reported on abuses and conditions in immigrant detention in the New Orleans ICE Field Office Area of Responsibility (NOLA ICE).<sup>[22]</sup> The report was based on over 6,000 interviews conducted over the course of two years. In harrowing detail, the report documented routine violations of standards of care and federal, state, and international law.

Consistently, individuals in detention reported denials of language access, such as interpretation and translation services, leaving them unable to access essential medical care and legal materials. Physical conditions deprived them of other necessities, such as minimally-nutritious food and potable drinking water, sanitary conditions of confinement, basic hygiene supplies, and access to sunlight and outdoor recreation. The report also found that individuals in immigration detention experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, torturous solitary confinement, humiliating and degrading speech, and retaliation against and suppression of speech and religious worship protected by the First Amendment. Medical care was sorely lacking, with denials of care reported for emergent, chronic, and urgent health conditions; denial of the right to informed consent to treatment; disruption of ongoing care due to sudden transfers in custody; denial of dental care; denial of reproductive health care; mental health neglect; medical neglect of people with disabilities; and fatal deficiencies in medical care.

In December 2024, the ACLU of Louisiana filed two complaints with the Department of Homeland Security's office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), detailing human rights violations at the South ICE Processing Center (or SLIPC, in Basile, LA) and Winn Correctional Center (Winnfield, LA). The Trump administration drastically reduced the CRCL office in 2025.<sup>[23]</sup>

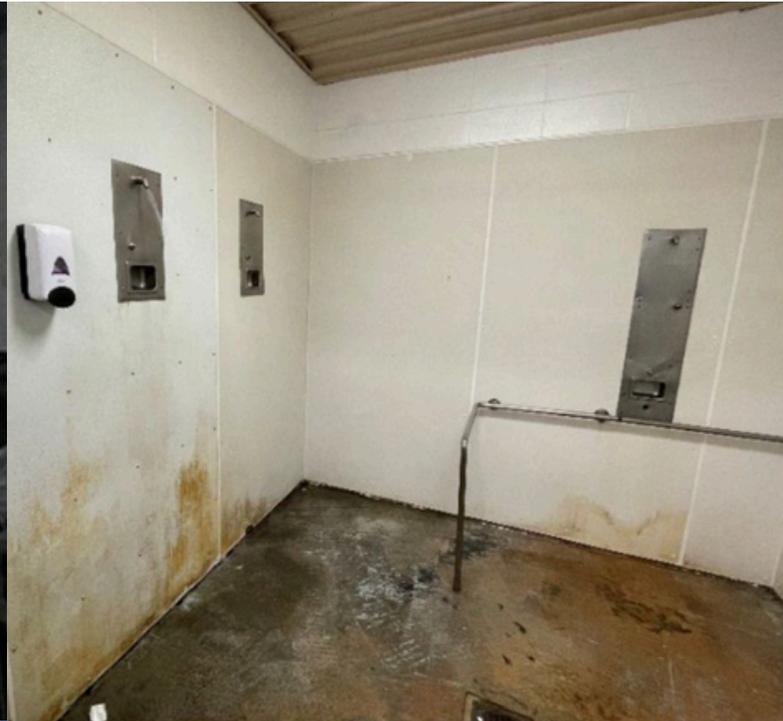
As noted in the SLIPC complaint, women detained at SLIPC reported poor conditions, with one woman noting: "I will give you an example that will show how things are: a couple of girls from the dorm started crying from happiness when we were given one banana that was not ripe." Medical care at SLIPC was also reportedly deficient, particularly gynecological care. Doctors reportedly told one detained individual who sought care after an unexpected stop in menstruation to "relax" and "not stress" without providing any additional medical evaluation or treatment. Reportedly, communicable diseases spread easily at the facility, including COVID-19 and tuberculosis, due to crowding and lack of precautions. One woman reported that she knew of multiple people who were in "terrible condition" at the hospital after contracting tuberculosis at Basile, adding that "no one is telling the truth about it." One non-English speaker described feeling like she was being treated like a dog, forced to respond to commands in English like "Hey!"

# BACKGROUND

People detained at Winn Correctional Center described denials of religious accommodations, insufficient language access, and insufficient access to legal resources essential to preparing their cases. They reported that Winn was forcing individuals in detention to pay for halal meals (but not for other religious accommodation meals), formalized in a policy memorandum entitled “Religious Diets” and dated March 12, 2024. They reported widespread language access issues, including lack of translation and interpretation support, leaving individuals unable to speak with officials. Guards reportedly did not respond to individuals, even when they were seeking help or safety. Access to legal resources, including the facility’s law library, was limited, directly impacting individuals’ ability to participate in their proceedings.

## INSIDE THE BLACK HOLE

SYSTEMIC HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AGAINST  
IMMIGRANTS DETAINED & DISAPPEARED IN LOUISIANA

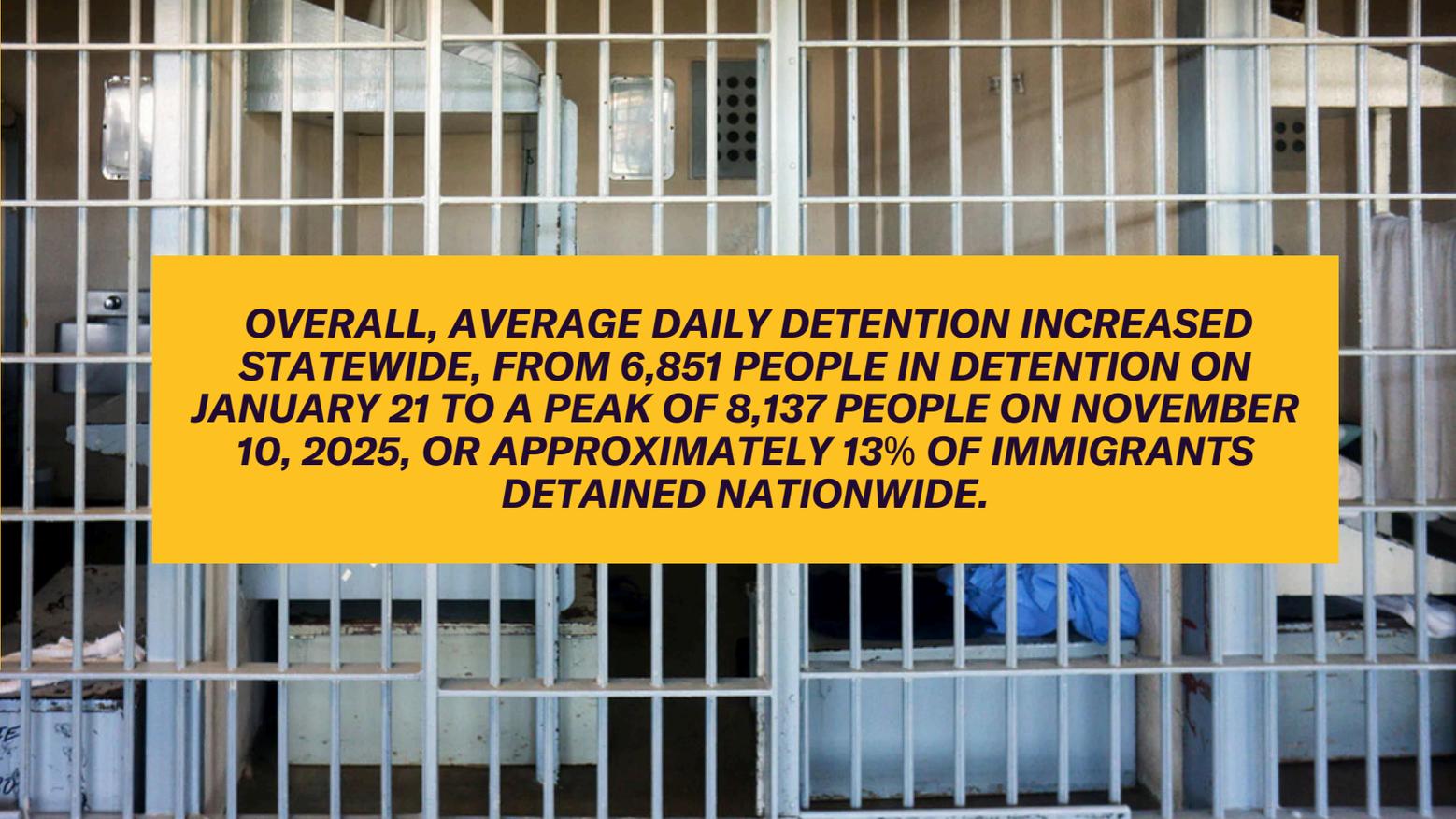


# ONE YEAR LATER

Since the publication of our report and our complaints to CRCL in 2024, as Louisiana made headlines for its detention network, conditions across the region remain substandard.

Louisiana was the site of detention for the Trump administration's targeting of several student immigrants, including Mahmoud Khalil (detained at Central Louisiana ICE Processing Center in Jena, LA)<sup>[24]</sup> and Rumeysa Ozturk (detained at SLIPC).<sup>[25]</sup> Concerns about the Trump administration's targeting and mass detention campaign led members of Congress to visit both facilities and the Alexandria Staging Facility (ASF), accompanied by the ACLU and the ACLU of Louisiana.<sup>[26]</sup>

Meanwhile, the use of 287(g) agreements with state and local law enforcement expanded.<sup>[27]</sup> An additional immigration detention center opened at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, the maximum-security prison known as Angola. Overall, average daily detention increased statewide, from 6,851 people in detention on January 21 to a peak of 8,137 people on November 10, 2025, or approximately 13% of immigrants detained nationwide.<sup>[28]</sup>



**OVERALL, AVERAGE DAILY DETENTION INCREASED STATEWIDE, FROM 6,851 PEOPLE IN DETENTION ON JANUARY 21 TO A PEAK OF 8,137 PEOPLE ON NOVEMBER 10, 2025, OR APPROXIMATELY 13% OF IMMIGRANTS DETAINED NATIONWIDE.**

# ICE OPENS A DETENTION CENTER AT LOUISIANA STATE PENITENTIARY

The Louisiana State Penitentiary is the largest maximum-security prison in the United States, and was recently described as “Hell on Earth.”<sup>[29]</sup> Prior to the Civil War, it was a slave labor farm known as the Angola Plantation. After Reconstruction, it became a prison labor camp and has been operated by the state of Louisiana since 1901. It is synonymous with harsh prison conditions, likened to “as probably as close to slavery as any person could come in 1930.”<sup>[30]</sup> It has been called “the worst prison in America” with conditions described by the American Bar Association in 1971 as “medieval, squalid and horrifying.”<sup>[31]</sup> A federal judge found that the facility had been “deliberately indifferent to inmates’ serious medical needs in the means and manner of the delivery of health care, in violation of the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution,” in 2021.<sup>[32]</sup> In 2023, a federal court ordered the removal of juveniles who had been housed on the grounds because of rampant abuses perpetrated against the young people incarcerated there.<sup>[33]</sup> One portion of the prison – known as Camp J - had been shuttered due to its inhumane conditions.<sup>[34]</sup>

**THE LOUISIANA STATE PENITENTIARY IS THE LARGEST MAXIMUM-SECURITY PRISON IN THE UNITED STATES, AND WAS RECENTLY DESCRIBED AS “HELL ON EARTH”**

In late July 2025, Governor Jeff Landry announced a state of emergency in order to quickly reopen Camp J as “Camp 57,” named after Landry (the state’s 57th governor) and also dubbed “Louisiana Lockup,” and dedicate it to immigrant detention.<sup>[35]</sup> The Department of Homeland Security announced that the facility would be used to hold “the worst of the worst.”<sup>[36]</sup> It later named the facility the Louisiana ICE Processing Center (“LIPC”), operated by Lasalle Corrections.

After its opening, the ACLU of Louisiana visited the facility in September and October 2025, and reports from LIPC demonstrate a disregard for the standards that immigrant detention centers must abide by. Individuals detained at Angola reported severely delayed or non-existent medical care. Several reported that medical staff informed them that they simply did not have the systems in place to secure the medication or medical treatment that they requested. Others reported that the physical structure of the place made it inhumane; there was no recreational space dedicated for people detained there, meaning that people in detention were forced to spend time either in their dormitory or on a narrow path wrapping around the building. Water at the facility contained metal shavings, which meant that the only potable water available to them was limited amounts of bottled water.

One individual detained at LIPC said, although he had been detained at several immigration detention facilities during the pendency of his case, “[LIPC] was the worst.”<sup>[37]</sup>

# WIDESPREAD HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ICE DETENTION

In 2025, the ACLU of Louisiana and partner organizations visited each of the detention centers within the NOLA ICE area of responsibility, meeting with over 2,000 people in both group and individual interviews. These interviews were primarily conducted in English, with interpretation as appropriate. Immigrants detained in Louisiana reported widespread issues, from basic living standards to pregnancy care. These ranged from inadequate food provision, inhumane treatment, and unsanitary and dangerous living conditions.

*The following are reports from interviews with immigrants in detention, shared with their consent:*

- Individuals reported that facilities were unsanitary and unsafe. For example, individuals reported that there were mice throughout their facility, with garbage on the floors. Toilet issues caused urine and feces to flood onto the floor and pool in the corner of cells.<sup>[38]</sup> At another facility, individuals described their experience as “like living in a public bathroom.”<sup>[39]</sup>
- Individuals reported mold and rust in their dorms, raising concerns about the basic habitability of the facilities. Individuals further reported that their dorms were infested with insects.<sup>[40]</sup>
- Individuals reported that their issued clothing was not laundered frequently and that they were provided only one shirt, one pair of socks, and one pair of underwear for undergarments.<sup>[41]</sup>
- Individuals reported that, even after stating they wished to voluntarily return to their home countries, they were forced to continue waiting in ICE custody in conditions that put their health at risk, including their pregnancies.<sup>[42]</sup>
- Individuals reported that the water in their dorms was not potable, noting that metal shavings were present in the water, and that the water had a petroleum-like smell. Nevertheless, individuals reported seeing staff collecting that water in cisterns and other containers for consumption.<sup>[43]</sup>
- Visitation by loved ones is challenging at the facilities, some of which are “no contact.” For example, by virtue of its location on a state prison, despite it being a civil detention center, no family visitation was permitted at Angola.<sup>[44]</sup>
- Individuals reported that due to a lack of access to legal resources required by ICE’s own standards, they were unable to prepare legal defenses and research the status of their cases prior to their immigration court hearings.<sup>[45]</sup>
- Individuals reported that the meals provided in detention were small and meagerly portioned. They reported that they did not receive coffee, and that they had not received any fresh fruit while in detention.<sup>[46]</sup>

# WIDESPREAD HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ICE DETENTION

*The following are reports from interviews with immigrants in detention, shared with their consent:*

- Individuals described their conditions as “living like animals.”<sup>[47]</sup> They reported that food sits out for hours and is served unpredictably. When asked by immigrants for specific mealtimes, the staff are reportedly nonresponsive.<sup>[48]</sup> Because there are no chairs or tables available to them in their dormitories, people in detention reported that everyone is forced to sit on the floor.<sup>[49]</sup>
- Several individuals reported that they do not receive sufficient opportunities to go outside for recreation. They reported that the daily opportunities to go outside are often cancelled, and periods of up to two weeks can go by without the opportunity to go outside. Some also reported that they are usually only allowed to go outside at 7:00 AM. Others reported that they only get 1 hour outdoors per day, six days a week, which was anecdotally noted to have been different than individuals’ experiences in other detention centers.<sup>[50]</sup>
- At another facility, individuals indicated that recreation was nonexistent, with no access to books and the only outdoor area available being an L-shaped area immediately outside their building.<sup>[51]</sup>
- Individuals reported that they were given a very small amount of soap and shampoo (one small soap, one small shampoo) to last two to three weeks.<sup>[52]</sup>

# MEDICAL SUPPORT IN ICE DETENTION

In 2025, individuals detained within the NOLA ICE area of responsibility also reported multiple medical support issues that resulted in substandard medical care. These reports included:

- Individuals reported that medical support in detention was minimal, with long wait times for treatment and repeated rescheduling.<sup>[53]</sup>
- Individuals reported that functionally, medical care in detention was limited to over-the-counter pain relievers.<sup>[54]</sup> Individuals further reported that they could not receive appropriate medication even when requested, receiving only aspirin.<sup>[55]</sup>
- Individuals detained in Louisiana reported that they did not receive evaluation or treatment for sinus issues, despite requests submitted over the course of three months.<sup>[56]</sup>
- One individual reported that no dietary accommodations were provided for his diabetes while he was detained.<sup>[57]</sup>

## Pregnancy Care in ICE Detention:

In April 2025, individuals contacted Kennedy Human Rights Center to notify them of numerous pregnant people detained at South Louisiana ICE Processing Center (SLIPC). That same month, a congressional delegation led by Representatives Bennie Thompson and Troy Carter visited the Central Louisiana ICE Processing Center (CLIPC) and SLIPC, accompanied by teams from the ACLU and the ACLU of Louisiana.<sup>[58]</sup> During the course of that visit, pregnant women detained at SLIPC spoke with members of Congress describing the terrible conditions they endured. This began deeper investigations, by congressional leaders and by immigrant rights advocates, into the conditions that pregnant people face in Louisiana detention centers.

The results were heartbreaking.<sup>[59]</sup> In partnership with other organizations, the ACLU found that people detained in ICE detention described a pattern of cruelty and medical neglect toward pregnant people in ICE custody, in direct violation of agency prohibitions on detaining and restraining pregnant individuals. These included poor treatment for women experiencing miscarriages, invasive examinations, a lack of appropriate prenatal medications, and hospitalization in shackles.<sup>[60]</sup>

Congressional investigations yielded similar results. On May 19, 2025, Senator Dick Durbin released a report detailing abuses in the New Orleans ICE Field Office's area of responsibility, including at SLIPC.<sup>[61]</sup> People detained at the facility expressed serious concern for pregnant women, and pregnant women told Committee staff they could not access adequate care. That report found that individuals suffering from serious medical conditions struggled to receive adequate care. As Senator Durbin described it, "cruelty and neglect are core to Trump's detention and deportation agenda and were present in treatment by facility staff."<sup>[62]</sup> On July 30, 2025, Senator John Ossoff released a report on the detention of pregnant women in other states, likewise finding repeated abuses of women and children.<sup>[63]</sup>

# CALL TO ACTION

With the anticipated expansion of immigrant detention in Louisiana – with plans to double its current detained population, using facilities in and around the Baton Rouge area<sup>[64]</sup> – it is more urgent than ever to demand accountability for the inhumane treatment of immigrants in ICE detention. Moreover, millions of Americans are investing in immigrant detention without even knowing it.<sup>[65]</sup> What is happening in Louisiana impacts all Americans. The individuals held here come from nearly every state and are often moved here intentionally away from their communities, loved ones, and attorneys. There is no excuse for a multi-billion dollar industry's failure to comply with ICE's own policies.

Contact your U.S. Representative/Senator and demand that Congress immediately investigate the widespread human rights abuses occurring in immigrant detention in Louisiana.

# SAMPLE CALL SCRIPT

Hello, my name is \_\_\_ and I'm calling from \_\_\_\_\_ [within the legislator's district].

I want Representative/Senator \_\_\_ to know that I strongly oppose the Trump Administration's policies on mandatory detention. The conditions in these facilities are inhumane and illegal. I do not think our government should be funding for-profit detention facilities when that money is needed elsewhere in our communities, such as for [name something that matters to you for funding – e.g., roads, small businesses, education, healthcare, etc.].

I call on Representative/Senator \_\_\_ to use his/her congressional oversight to visit and investigate the widespread human rights abuses in immigration detention. I believe they should also use their congressional authority to call hearings and subpoena DHS officials, company management, and facilities wardens to answer for what is happening right now. No one in civil detention should be subject to these conditions and treatment - we have laws and oversight already to prevent this from happening in our prisons and jails.

I do not want this to be happening in my name and Representative/Senator \_\_\_ must take action. Thank you.

*\*To find your Representative or Senator, you can use the following website:  
<https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>*

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# ENDNOTES

45. Interview, August 2025, Jackson Correctional Center.
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