



# SARAH ECKHARDT

STATE SENATOR • DISTRICT 14

January 28, 2026

Governor Greg Abbott  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Abbott,

I write today to share my deep concerns regarding the ongoing operations conducted by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) throughout the United States, but particularly here in Texas. I strongly urge you to use your authority as the chief executive of Texas to bring about a cessation of ICE operations in Texas until an independent investigation can be conducted to provide a thorough review of the agency's actions.

Communities are directly feeling the repercussions of ICE's actions. Individuals are being arrested in Texas for attending their lawfully scheduled immigration proceedings and families are being separated. We have all been troubled by the recent events in Minneapolis, where Alex Pretti was shot fatally by federal agents while he was helping a woman and legally exercising both his constitutional 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment right to free assembly and protest, and his 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment right to bear arms. He was the second U.S. citizen to be shot fatally by federal agents in three weeks.

As elected officials, we swear an oath to uphold the Constitution. It is incumbent upon us to respect and abide by the rule of law. We all agree that our laws should be enforced. However, this—or any—administration must also have fidelity to the law. They may not pick and choose when to throw out our fundamental constitutional rights in an effort to enforce some laws over others. Certainly, no one—including agents of the government—should be above the law.

I know you well understand that our democracy relies on the power of checks and balances between the three branches of government as well as between the states and the federal government. I agree with your recent statement that the White House needs to “*recalibrate*” in regards to ICE.

I also agree with former Austin and Houston police chief, Art Acevedo, when he said; “*[m]odern policing is rooted in procedural justice, the principle that how we enforce the law matters just as much as what law we enforce. Respect, transparency, and restraint are not political concepts. They*



*are operational necessities. Without them, cooperation disappears, clearance rates fall, and violent offenders thrive.”* In Texas, we have worked diligently to improve community and police relations. However, these recent incidents illustrate a fundamental issue with ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents—they have civil, not criminal, authority and, as a result, they do not receive traditional law enforcement training, including de-escalation and use of force. The tactics deployed by ICE in recent months not only do not align with law enforcement best practices, **they run contrary to it.**

I have heard from many of my constituents who are deeply troubled that Texas has become the epicenter of the nation’s immigration detention system. We house more immigration detention facilities than any other state. We are hearing credible reports that indicate these facilities do not meet basic health and safety standards. In just the past two months, ICE has reported four deaths in its custody in Texas. One of them, a 55-year-old Cuban man, was ruled a homicide by the El Paso Medical Examiner. Another report about the detention of a 5-year-old boy and his father from Minnesota in a South Texas facility has reignited outrage over the Trump administration’s renewed policy of locking up families—a policy that overwhelmingly plays out in Texas, even when families are apprehended elsewhere since Texas is the only state with detention centers that hold children and their parents. Legal filings detail families held for extended periods to pressure them into giving up their cases, with children denied clean water, adequate food, and basic medical care. These tactics would appear to violate the law. The state of Texas should not continue enabling this harm.

I know you are hearing from others as well, I want to add my voice to those urging you to act now and cease cooperation with ICE operations that perpetuate abuse, endanger lives, and bring lasting damage to families and communities across this state and the country until we get some independently verified answers about some of these ongoing and repeated allegations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SEK' with a large flourish extending to the right.

Sarah Eckhardt  
State Senator, District 14