

DIANE BLACK
6TH DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

SUBCOMMITTEE OVERSIGHT

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET



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October 29, 2014

Mr. Thomas Winkowski
Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Acting Director Winkowski:

I am writing with concern over what appears to be U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) misleading Congress and the general public in 2013 when it released what the agency deemed low risk individuals from immigration jails. It was later uncovered through the review of official agency documents that some of those released faced far greater charges, including sexual assault, homicide and kidnapping.

The news that your agency released violent criminals onto our streets and into our communities raises serious concerns and questions. ICE spokeswoman Gillian Christensen was quoted as saying, "the releases involving individuals with more significant criminal histories were, by and large, dictated by special circumstances outside of the agency's control." It was later found that an ICE spreadsheet released under the Freedom of Information Act contained some 144 detainees released due to "special issues".

- What were the special circumstances Ms. Christensen spoke of when discussing what dictated the release of individuals with significant criminal histories?
- Who specifically directed ICE to release individuals with criminal histories and what was the reasoning behind the decision?
- Was the decision to release individuals with significant criminal histories made available to Members of Congress or local and state officials before the action was taken?
- What are the special issues that warranted the release of the above mentioned detainees?
- Please explain what dictated the special issues.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter. I look forward to reviewing your responses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diane Black".

Diane Black
Member of Congress