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Congress of the United States
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November 4, 2015

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
United States Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

I write to ask you to provide me with an update on what the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has done so far to address any deficiencies in immigration enforcement that may have been illustrated by the tragic and preventable July 2015 murder of Kate Steinle. I also urge you to take any additional actions necessary to ensure something like it never happens again.

Kate was originally from Pleasanton, California, located in my congressional district. Her family still lives there, and I have known them for many years. That is why I am so concerned that something positive come out of her senseless death.

As you know, Kate's accused murderer, Juan Francisco Lopez-Sanchez, was previously deported five times and had seven felony convictions. After he completed a prison sentence in March, he was transferred to the San Francisco Sheriff's Department because of a 1995 warrant relating to a marijuana charge. That case was quickly dropped, and he was eventually released. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was not notified prior to his release by the San Francisco Sheriff's Department, as it had requested. The sheriff's failure to notify ICE is unacceptable, and situations like this cannot happen again.

I understand the hesitancy of cities and towns to facilitate the deportation of non-criminal, undocumented immigrant offenders as a general matter. Doing so is not right, can unnecessarily break apart families, and sows distrust in communities. This distrust only serves to make law enforcement more difficult. It is also important to remember sanctuary cities were created in part out of a need to ensure that victims and witnesses to crimes would not be deported, a concept we should continue to honor.

However, there is no reason to shield from removal persons who have come to this country and committed felonies or otherwise showed themselves to be a threat to public safety. Federal immigration officials must find a way to work and communicate with state and local personnel, especially law enforcement, to see such persons are promptly deported. Please let me know what DHS has done so far and is considering doing in the future to see that this happens. I also am interested in your views on what Congress can and should do to help facilitate this cooperation.

I know you and all of DHS share my commitment to a rational and fair immigration enforcement system. Now having identified potential problems in it, it is incumbent on us to act quickly to make any corrections necessary. We must do all we can, together, to prevent future tragedies.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Eric Swalwell

Member of Congress