

## Governor Bryan Defies Trump's Immigration Crackdown, Federal Repercussions Possible

**Bryan has ordered government employees not to assist ICE, placing the USVI in opposition to Trump's immigration policy. The stance could lead to funding cuts and potential legal consequences for the territory.**

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**ICE immigration raids in Puerto Rico last week. By. U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT**

In a recent directive, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has instructed all government employees, including those in the Department of Education and local law enforcement, not to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations within the territory. This guidance,

through an official letter from the Office of the Governor, comes in response to what Mr. Bryan says are reports of ICE agents approaching residents, including at public schools.

Mr. Bryan's directive, issued on January 29, 2025, states that immigration enforcement is a function of the federal government and should not be assisted by local authorities. The Governor's Office emphasized that all government-managed spaces, including schools, should be areas of safety and stability, regardless of residents' immigration status.

The directive outlines specific instructions for schools and law enforcement personnel in the territory.

- Schools should not allow ICE agents to enter school buildings unless they present a warrant signed by a judicial officer. Administrative warrants are not sufficient to permit entry into non-public spaces.
- ICE agents are prohibited from speaking with students without parental consent, and school personnel must not disclose immigration-related information without a judicial order or subpoena.
- Any ICE presence on or near school grounds must be reported to superiors, and the Commissioner of Education must immediately notify the Attorney General of any ICE activity.
- Local law enforcement officers are directed not to aid ICE agents in immigration enforcement efforts, as their responsibility is to protect residents and enforce territorial laws.

"As Virgin Islanders, we celebrate our community's diversity, and we will continue to protect the rights of all our residents," Governor Bryan stated in the directive.

The governor's directive comes as President Donald Trump's administration expands immigration enforcement across the United States and its territories.

Recently, ICE has arrested thousands of illegal immigrants nationwide as part of a sweeping immigration crackdown. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem personally participated in an enforcement operation in New York City, reinforcing the administration's commitment to stringent immigration measures?.

Additionally, the Trump administration is considering lowering immigration detention standards to increase local law enforcement cooperation. Tom Homan, the administration's border czar, has proposed that sheriffs detain migrants under state standards rather than stricter ICE guidelines, aiming to broaden participation in federal immigration enforcement?.

The USVI's stance on immigration enforcement reflects a growing divide between local and federal governments regarding immigration policies. Governor Bryan's refusal to assist ICE aligns with similar policies in states and cities run by Democrats that have chosen not to participate in federal immigration crackdowns.

The Trump administration remains firm in its resolve, with plans to increase direct deportations, expand detention facilities, and use military resources to assist in removals. Governor Bryan's stance on refusing cooperation with ICE comes with potential consequences under Trump administration policies, including the following:

- Threats of investigations and prosecution: Federal prosecutors were instructed to investigate and potentially prosecute state and local officials who obstructed immigration enforcement.

These charges could include defrauding the U.S. government or harboring undocumented immigrants.

- Withholding of federal funds: Under Trump's previous immigration policies, jurisdictions that refused to comply with ICE directives faced the loss of federal funding, particularly affecting cities and states labeled as sanctuary jurisdictions. The administration directed federal agencies to ensure that funding did not reach noncompliant jurisdictions.

It remains unclear how these policies will apply to the U.S. Virgin Islands, but Governor Bryan's directive places the territory among jurisdictions resisting federal immigration enforcement efforts.