



**One Hundred Nineteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

December 18, 2025

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

I am writing to request that the GAO conduct a review of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) unprecedented current hiring surge.

The OBBBA (One Big Beautiful Bill Act), signed into law on July 4, 2025, provided nearly \$30 billion to ICE to significantly expand its workforce, including funding for hiring and onboarding 10,000 new Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) officers and 1,000 new Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) agents by the end of 2025, which would more than double the number of ERO officers from roughly 6,000 to 16,000 and increase the size of HSI by more than 10 percent. ICE's goal is to hire all 11,000 new officers and agents by December 31, 2025.

To meet this hiring goal, ICE has introduced a range of measures to accelerate hiring, including large signing bonuses of up to \$50,000, changing age restrictions—including lowering the minimum age for ICE agents from 21 years old to 18 years old and removing the upper age limit – and streamlining pathways for prior service and retired law enforcement applicants. ICE has also made significant changes to its training to bring new recruits onboard faster. News reports indicate that the training period for ICE trainees at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) in Georgia shrunk from thirteen weeks to eight weeks—and then to six weeks.¹

To date, the Administration reports that ICE is on track to hire the 11,000 new agents and officers by the end of the calendar year. This rapid expansion—the most significant staffing increase in the agency's history—raises important questions about how ICE has changed its hiring standards and training protocols to meet its staffing aims. According to news reports, the agency has reportedly rushed new recruits into its training program before being properly vetted, leading

¹ Nick Miroff, Fast Times at Immigration and Customs Enforcement, THE ATLANTIC, (Aug. 26, 2025), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/08/ice-recruitment-immigration-enforcement-billions/684000/>.

some trainees to drop out due to failing background checks, academic requirements, or fitness standards. These reports have indicated that many of the issues surfaced during training only after the recruits admitted during training that they had not been fingerprinted or drug tested, raising concerns that individuals who did not disclose such lapses may already be on the job. ICE has dismissed more than 200 new recruits while they were in training for falling short of requirements, according to these news reports.²

Federal law enforcement officers and agents have historically been held to high eligibility standards, often exceeding those of State and local agencies, and have undergone a stringent vetting process. Once hired, Federal law enforcement officers and agents have received extensive training to ensure they meet the performance standards required for these positions of trust. However, since ICE's hiring surge began, we are concerned with reports that the agency has changed eligibility criteria and training requirements, thus creating the potential for an insufficiently trained and vetted force consisting of thousands of new officers and agents. We have significant concerns that these changes are affecting the integrity, professionalism, and readiness of the ICE law enforcement workforce.

Given the scale and pace of this expansion of the ICE law enforcement workforce, and the current and long-term implications for immigration enforcement operations and criminal investigations, congressional oversight is essential. As such, we request that GAO address the following questions:

- 1) To what extent has ICE changed its hiring process or eligibility requirements since the hiring surge commenced, such as for educational requirements, polygraph testing, drug testing, physical fitness standards, language requirements, background check criteria, or prior experience?
- 2) To what extent has ICE met its hiring goal of 11,000 officers and agents by December 31, 2025?
 - a. How many law enforcement agents and officers has ICE hired and onboarded since the hiring surge commenced?
 - b. How many ICE trainees have begun training at FLETC since the hiring surge commenced and to what extent have these trainees begun training prior to having their background and suitability checks or other requisite hiring process steps completed?
 - c. How many individuals have been removed from training at FLETC due to adverse findings from these checks or lack of satisfactory completion of other hiring process steps? How many individuals have been removed from field work after completing FLETC training due to adverse findings from these checks or lack of satisfactory completion of other hiring process steps?

² For example, see <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/new-ice-recruits-showed-training-full-vetting-rcna238739>.


- d. How many ICE recruits have not been required to train at FLETC and instead began with training in the field since the hiring surge commenced? To what extent have these recruits begun training prior to having their background and suitability checks or other requisite hiring process steps completed? To what extent have these recruits begun field work prior to completing training and background and suitability checks?
 - e. How many of these individuals who began their training in the field have been removed due to adverse findings from background and suitability checks or lack of satisfactory completion of other hiring process steps?
 - f. How do completion rates for hiring process steps compare with prior years?
 - g. What have the costs been to train recruits or trainees who are ultimately determined to be not suitable and are removed from the training academy or field locations?
- 3) To what extent have ICE training programs, curriculum, and standards for new officers and agents been modified, and are there differences in training or hiring standards, to include academic and fitness standards, for experienced law enforcement officers compared with those without relevant experience?
 - 4) What changes, if any, has ICE made to post-academy on-the-job training and probationary requirements to accommodate the influx of new law enforcement hires?
 - 5) How does ICE track performance, retention, and disciplinary actions for agents and officers and how, if at all, has this changed since the hiring surge commenced?
 - 6) What have been ICE's costs for hiring, training, and onboarding new agents and officers, and to what extent has ICE projected future year or ongoing costs for the expanded immigration enforcement workforce?

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact the Committee on Homeland Security at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member



J. Luis Correa
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Border
Security and Enforcement



Shri Thanedar
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations