

Sanctuary City Op-Ed Nashville

Alex Horne

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Consider the fact that 57% of undocumented people living in the US have been in the country for more than 10 years (according to best estimates). Consider the fact that 56,000 Tennessean children have an undocumented parent who they depend on, and 150,000 families in the country have an undocumented member. 74% of these families do not own their home, and 70% of them have no health insurance. Rather than a burden on state resources, people without papers and their dependents make do with much less and contribute far surplus value to the economy than they are compensated for: 70% are employed (25% are not seeking employment, leaving only 5% searching for jobs), and they are employed in vital industries such as construction, manufacturing, and agriculture doing tasks that documented residents and full citizens are not willing to do. Undocumented labour generates \$143.4 million in federal tax revenue and yet 29% of undocumented households survive on poverty or sub-poverty incomes.

Non-cooperation with federal customs enforcement is not just good governance, it's also good politics. District attorneys and sheriffs departments around the country, not just in liberal leaning cities. Federal attorneys and ICE argue that honouring detainers, the request that local police hold an suspected criminal in custody, is necessary for the justice system to function. What they conveniently leave unspoken is that undocumented immigration is not a crime and that detaining people without a pressing legal warrant (such as from a judge) is unconstitutional.

Nashville's previous policy of non-compliance was reversed by Mayor Cooper; the Tennessee assembly has passed laws prohibiting municipal governments