

Center for Constitutional Rights

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://ccrjustice.org/home/blog/2016/03/22/congress-members-weigh-against-detention-bed-quota>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

The CCR blog

Many members of Congress continue to battle the structures funding our immigration detention system. Last week, a group of 56 members of the House of Representatives renewed the call for an end to the detention bed quota, the Congressional appropriations bill that funds 34,000 immigration beds per day, 62% of those in private, for-profit facilities. In a letter to the leaders of the House Subcommittee on Homeland Security, they wrote,

The detention bed mandate is unprecedented. [N]o other law enforcement agency has a quota on the number of people they must keep in jail each day. Removing the mandate language from the appropriations bill would bring ICE in line with the best practices of law enforcement agencies. These best practices focus on using detention beds based on actual need. The savings from removing the detention bed mandate would permit the Agency to focus limited resources on its many other responsibilities.

The detention bed mandate is costly. We spend more than \$2 billion per year on immigration detention, or about \$5.05 million a day. A single detention bed is approximately \$126.46 per day. Mandating a specific number of detention beds prevents ICE from pursuing less costly alternatives to detention, including parole, supervised release, and community-based programs. Alternatives range in cost between 70 cents and \$17 per day. Yet, the bed quota forces ICE to detain individuals, even in instances where alternatives would be appropriate.

It is past time that Congress ends this wasteful detention bed quota.

[You can read the full letter here.](#)

In 2013 CCR filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with our partner [Detention Watch Network](#) (DWN) [seeking documents](#) about the detention bed quota and its influence on immigration enforcement. When ICE and DHS refused to release any information, we went to court and won an order directing the agencies to provide the documents. The information provided by the government so far has shown how private prison companies like Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and GEO Group influence and incentivize the detention of immigrants, detailed in [our report with DWN released last June](#). This past November, we went back to court to compel the agencies to reveal specific information about the local quotas that these companies insert into detention contracts, which are fundamental to how they profit off the criminalization of immigrant communities, including in government facilities that sub-contract with private companies.

The public has the right to understand the economic incentives that are driving government detention policies and devastating thousands of families on a daily basis. As public awareness of the cruelties of immigration detention grows, Congressional representatives have taken action to stop the influence of the private prison industry, in the last year introducing bills to end guaranteed minimum payments to private immigration contractors and proposing the end of private prison contracting altogether. That 56 House members have called for an end to the quota altogether striking not just at private contractors but at the entire immigration detention system demonstrates the increasing public concern about our senseless immigration enforcement and deportation policy.

[View the discussion thread.](#)

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