

October 1, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader, U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Democratic Leader Pelosi:

We the undersigned law enforcement associations, chiefs of police, and sheriffs, write to express our strong opposition to the SAFE Act (H.R. 2278) and similar legislative proposals that expand state and local participation in the enforcement of immigration laws.

Congress has a historic opportunity to enact fair, commonsense reforms to our nation's immigration laws. This opportunity will be lost if the House of Representatives instead passes the SAFE Act. The SAFE Act is being billed as a law enforcement measure, but what it would actually do is diminish public safety and make our jobs as officers of the law more difficult.

The SAFE Act would radically alter the nature of federal immigration enforcement by vesting enforcement decisions in the hands of state and local law enforcement officials where it does not belong. Immigration is a solely federal policy and it demands a national solution.

Police agencies across the country have worked hard to build community partnerships, which are the cornerstone of preventing crime. The trust we strive for would be harmed by passage of the SAFE Act or similar legislation expanding state and local immigration enforcement. Studies have shown that Latino victims of crimes are 44% less likely to call the police because they fear the police will ask about their immigration status or the status of someone that they know (this proportion increases to 70% for undocumented immigrants).<sup>1</sup> In addition, victims of domestic violence and trafficking, in particular,

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<sup>1</sup> University of Chicago, "Insecure Communities: Latino Perceptions of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement (May 2013), available at [http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97c6d565-bb43-406d-a6d5-eca3bbf35afo%7D/INSECURE\\_COMMUNITIES\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97c6d565-bb43-406d-a6d5-eca3bbf35afo%7D/INSECURE_COMMUNITIES_REPORT_FINAL.PDF).

may often be dissuaded from contacting the police over fears of inquiries regarding immigration status.

In addition, the SAFE Act would divert scarce and critical resources away from the core mission of local police – to create safer communities. Requiring police to investigate and detain community members based solely upon their immigration status hurts public safety, and wastes limited law enforcement resources. And the complexity of immigration law, combined with the lack of adequate training and resources, increases the risk of civil liability for local police departments tasked with investigating and enforcing potential immigration law violations.

Moreover, the SAFE Act would also undermine the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system by littering it with unverified, non-criminal immigration-related information. NCIC is a vital tool for the law enforcement community; by cluttering it with reams of non-criminal records, the SAFE Act would make it harder for our officers to rely on the system when doing their job. We see no legitimate law enforcement reason to add millions of civil immigration records to the NCIC. This provision of the SAFE Act would bog the system down and divert our agencies' resources away from criminal law enforcement priorities and public safety.

The SAFE Act is a misguided approach to reforming our immigration laws and it would make all of our communities less safe. Instead of diverting resources away from fighting crime, Congress should reaffirm that immigration enforcement is solely a federal responsibility.

For these reasons we urge you to oppose the SAFE Act and any similar legislation that would undermine our relationship with the public we are sworn to protect. Thank you for your attention and for your leadership in this historic process.

Sincerely,

Major Cities Chiefs Police Association (MCCA)

National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)

Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)

Chief Jack Harris, Phoenix, Arizona, Police Department (Retired)

Chief Roberto Villaseñor, Tucson, Arizona, Police Department

Chief David Bejarano, Chula Vista, California, Police Department

Chief Sergio Diaz, Riverside, California, Police Department

District Attorney George Gascón, San Francisco, California

Chief William M. Lansdowne, San Diego, California, Police Department

Police Chief Michael Meehan, City of Berkeley, California, Police Department

Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi, City and County of San Francisco, California, Sheriff's Office

Chief Vicki Myers, Seaside, California, Police Department

Chief Gregory Suhr, San Francisco, California, Police Department

Chief Jane Castor, Tampa, Florida, Police Department

Sheriff Jerry L. Demings, Orange County, Florida, Sheriff's Office

Chief Manuel Orosa, Miami, Florida, Police Department

Chief John F. Timoney, Miami, Florida, Police Department (retired) & Commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department (retired)

Sheriff Mark Curran, Jr., Lake County, Illinois, Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Bill McCarthy, Polk County, Iowa, Sheriff's Office

Chief Michael W. Tupper, Marshalltown, Iowa, Police Department

Chief J. Thomas Manger, Montgomery County, Maryland, Police Department

Commissioner Edward F. Davis, Boston, Massachusetts, Police Department

Sheriff Craig D. Apple, Sr., Albany County, New York, Sheriff's Office

Chief Richard Biehl, Dayton, Ohio, Police Department

Commissioner Charles H. Ramsey, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Police Department

Chief Art Acevedo, Austin, Texas, Police Department

Chief Greg Allen, El Paso, Texas, Police Department

Chief Jeffrey Halstead, Fort Worth, Texas, Police Department

Sheriff Richard D. Wiles, El Paso, Texas, Sheriff's Office

Chief Chris Burbank, Salt Lake City, Utah, Police Department

Sheriff Ken Irwin, Yakima County, Washington, Sheriff's Office

Chief Noble Wray, Madison, Wisconsin, Police Department

Director Eduardo Gonzalez, United States Marshals Service (Retired)