

Press Release From Chief Judge Carl Ashley dated April 6, 2025

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents detaining individuals within the courthouse complex pose significant concerns regarding the integrity and impartiality of the judicial system. Courthouses are traditionally places where individuals can seek justice and legal recourse without fear of retribution or apprehension. The following points highlight the issues at stake:

1. **Chilling Effect on Access to Justice:** The presence of ICE agents can deter individuals, particularly immigrants and marginalized communities, from attending court hearings, seeking legal assistance, or reporting crimes. This undermines the fundamental right to access the courts and seek legal remedies.
2. **Erosion of Trust in the Judicial System:** When individuals perceive courthouses as unsafe due to the fear of detention, trust in the judicial system erodes. This can lead to a reluctance to engage with law enforcement, legal representation, and the courts, ultimately hindering the administration of justice.
3. **Confusion over Legal Protections:** Many individuals may not be aware of their rights or the protections afforded to them within the courthouse. The presence of ICE can create confusion and misinformation, impacting their ability to navigate the legal system effectively.

In summary, allowing ICE agents to operate within courthouse complexes has the potential to significantly damage the integrity of the court system. It undermines the principles of justice, fairness, and equality before the law, and ultimately jeopardizes the rights of individuals seeking to navigate the legal process. Courts must remain safe havens for all individuals, free from the threats of immigration enforcement.

Chief Judge Carl Ashley, Milwaukee District #1