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By:  Reynolds H.C.R. No. 19

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has strayed far from its original mission, gaining a disturbing reputation as a mass-deportation strike force incompatible with democracy and human rights; and

WHEREAS, In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks against our nation, ICE was established to promote national security by preventing "acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money, and materials that support terrorist and criminal activities"; the agency grew wildly in subsequent years, losing its focus as its budget ballooned with multimillion dollar contracts for private companies backed by swarms of lobbyists; and

WHEREAS, Today, some 8,000 ICE agents are tasked with locating, arresting, detaining, and removing undocumented immigrants; only about 6,000 are involved in tracking the terrorists and transnational crime syndicates that present a grave peril to the nation and its people; these agents in ICE's Homeland Security Investigations division combat money laundering, drug trafficking, human smuggling, child exploitation, and cybercrimes; in counter-proliferation operations, they target individuals attempting to smuggle military and high-tech equipment out of the country; HSI has also been involved in such complex, high-profile cases as the takedown of the nefarious Silk Road website and the arrest and capture of Sinaloa cartel leader Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera; and

WHEREAS, In June 2018, 19 special agents in charge of regional HSI offices submitted a letter to the secretary of Homeland Security requesting that their division be spun off from ICE, stating that their work has been undermined by ICE's controversial detention and deportation policies; they cited a breakdown in partnerships with local law enforcement officials, who question the independence of their agency in light of aggressive measures against immigration; such actions include targeting families at churches and schools, conducting massive raids, arresting undocumented workers for minor offenses, and breaking up families by sending longtime U.S. residents to countries they hardly know; and

WHEREAS, While resources are directed away from agents dedicated to national security, ICE exercises increased surveillance of communities of color and immigrant communities; moreover, its draconian detention policies have filled the coffers of companies that run for-profit facilities with a long, troubling history of lax oversight, unsafe conditions, and grotesque mistreatment, as documented by the DHS Office of Inspector General; in the 2019 fiscal year alone, ICE detained more than 510,000 immigrants, 81 percent of whom were held in such private facilities, costing taxpayers millions of dollars; and

WHEREAS, Before the creation of ICE, immigration violations were handled by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which was part of the Department of Justice and worked closely with the Department of Labor; the inclusion of these functions under ICE has led to the deprioritization of transnational crime fighting while framing immigration, historically an engine of economic development and societal enrichment, as a national security threat; ICE has become a bloated agency tainted by controversy and largely unmoored from its original purpose, and the responsible path forward is to transfer its critical national security functions and develop a more humane and effective immigration system that complies with constitutional protections, domestic law, and binding international treaties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 87th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the United States Congress to abolish U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.