

How to talk



about defunding ICE and CBP— and investing in our communities

Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, no matter where we come from. Yet, the federal government wastes more than **\$23 billion every year** on jailing and deporting immigrants in pursuit of its cruel anti-immigrant agenda. With our tax dollars, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have separated thousands of loved ones and caused hundreds of deaths, dramatically expanding an immigration enforcement system that fails to uphold our values.

Help build support for our campaign to defund ICE and CBP. Use our seven tips to communicate with lawmakers, write a letter to the editor, and talk with friends and family about cutting the budgets of these harmful agencies.

DO lead with dignity and respect.

Messages that lead with this shared value can help persuade a broad audience. Use conversation-starters like:

- “Every person should be treated with dignity and respect. In the United States, the federal government should not abuse or mistreat people, no matter where they were born or how they came to this country” *or*
- “Treating people with cruelty goes against our values. The federal government is responsible for keeping every immigrant safe and treating everyone with dignity and respect.”

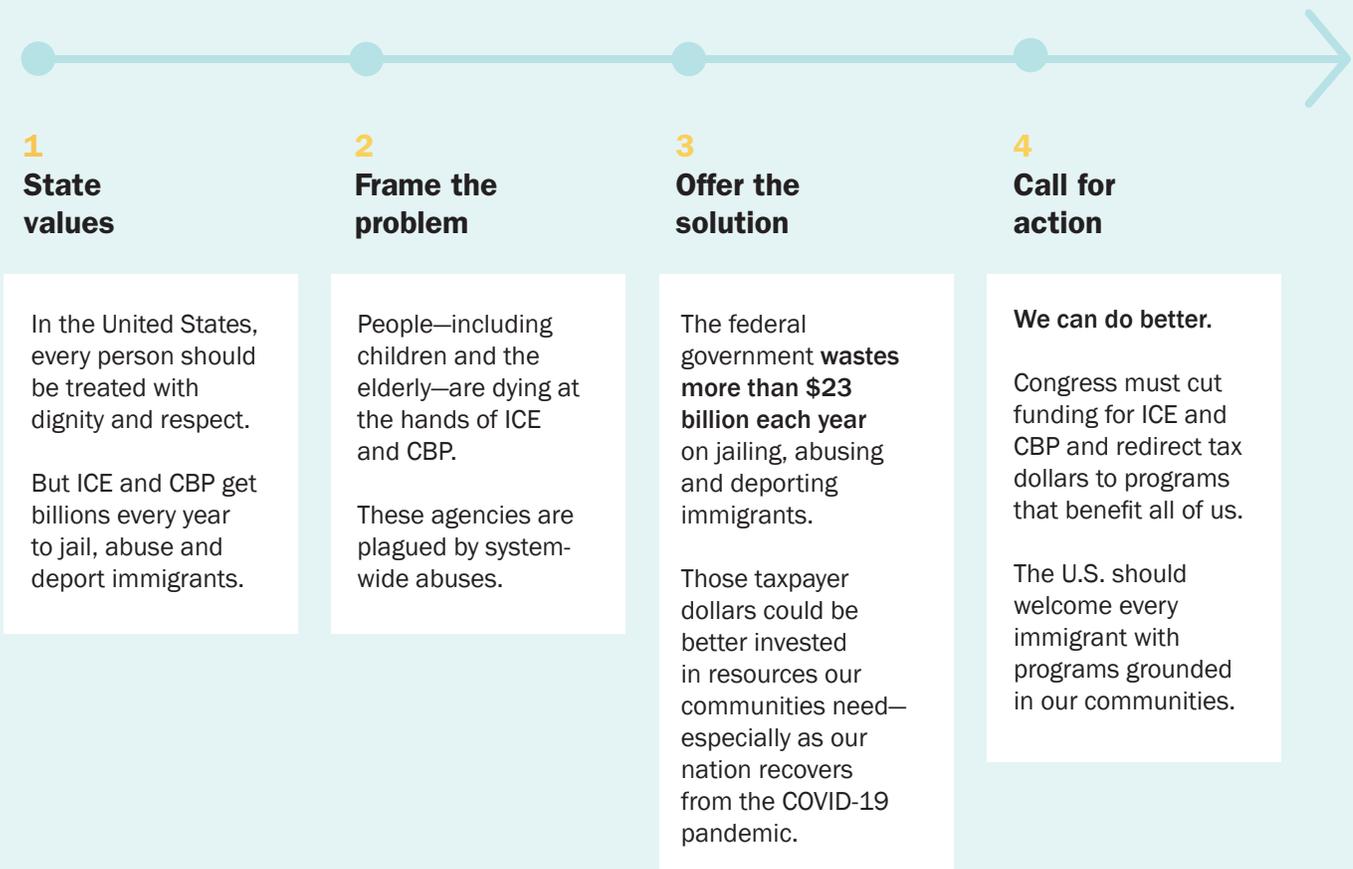


72% of respondents agree that we should place immigrants in a community-based case management program instead of jail while they await a hearing on their immigration status.

DO lead with real priorities: the pandemic and economic relief.

Getting the pandemic under control and economic relief that benefit everyone are the top priorities for the majority of people we surveyed. Make it clear that money spent on immigration enforcement means less money for pandemic relief. For example: “We need to focus on our priorities right now, and spend our resources where it counts—getting the pandemic under control, rebuilding the economy, and investing in infrastructure, education, and healthcare.”

How to create a narrative arc



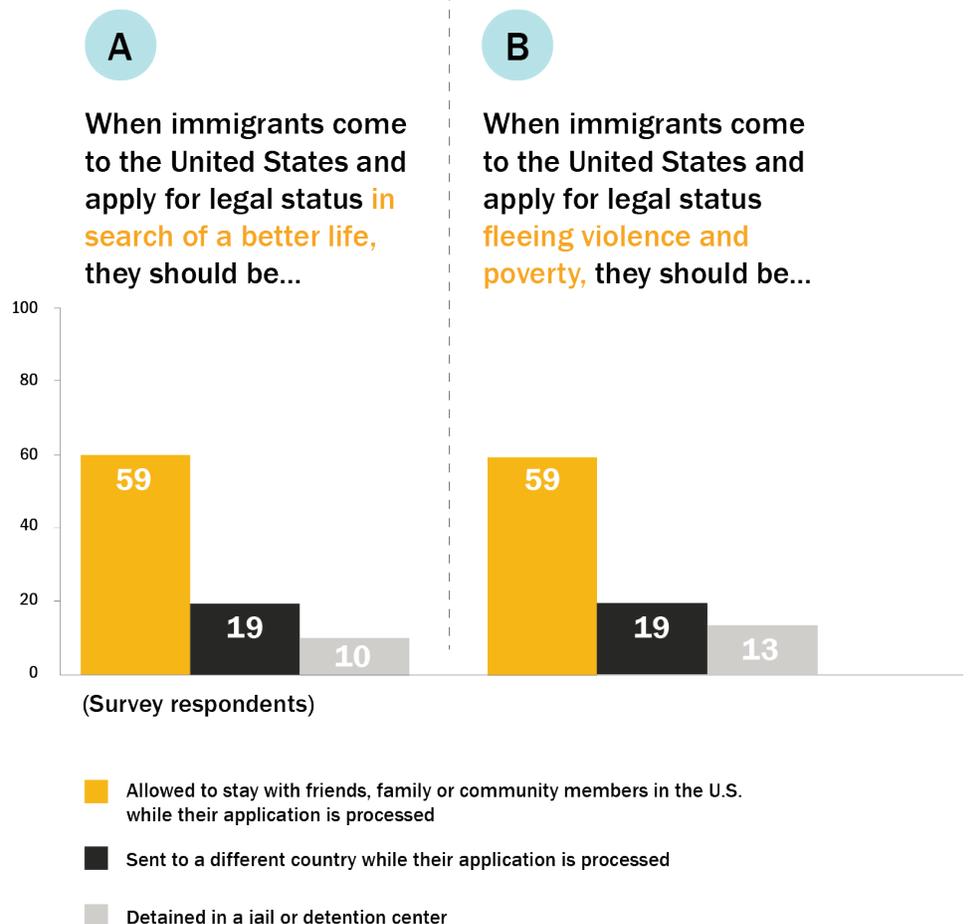
DO use specific language about ICE and CBP's abuses,

such as explaining that ICE and CBP tear children away from their parents, rather than using shorthand like “family separation” to describe this suffering. Our research showed that the majority of survey respondents do not know anything about these agencies and the devastating impact that they have had on our communities, so try messages like:

- “People—including children and the elderly—are dying at the hands of ICE and CBP. These agencies are plagued by system-wide abuses. Since 2004, over 190 people have died in ICE custody, and since 2010 at least 102 have died after interacting with CBP.”
- “ICE and CBP have heartlessly taken thousands of children away from their parents, abused and neglected people in inhumane jails and detention centers, and allowed hundreds of people to die in their custody. They consistently reject oversight and accountability. They jail people in unsanitary, overcrowded facilities and suffer no consequences for endangering the health and safety of hundreds of thousands of people.”

Respondents nationwide want immigrants to be allowed to stay with family and friends.

This holds true however we frame the question.

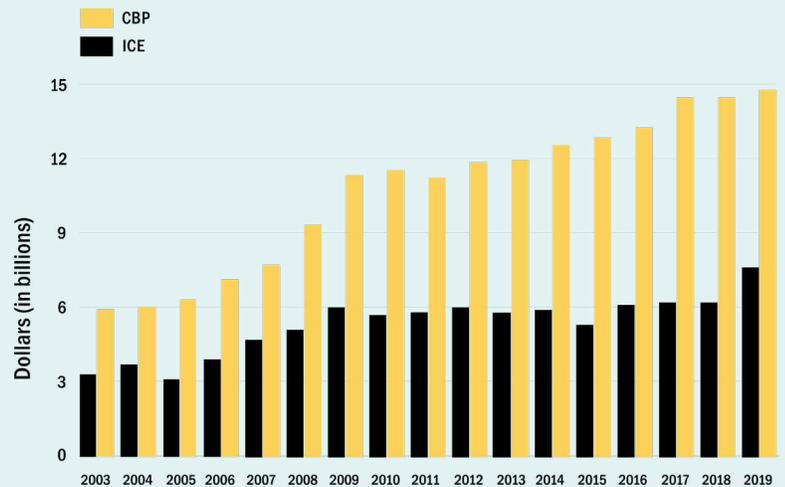


DO emphasize ICE and CBP's astronomical budget,

which was over \$23 billion dollars this year.

Our research showed that many survey respondents are alarmed by ICE and CBP's budget levels, and that just mentioning this large number can persuade many that their budget should be cut.

Annual ICE and CBP budgets



DO emphasize that tax dollars could be better spent on programs that benefit all of us.

It is important to share with anyone who doesn't know much about this issue what we want to see happen with our tax dollars. Health care, jobs, and programs like Social Security are the top spending priorities across the communities we surveyed. Our study showed that many survey respondents are most bothered by ICE and CBP's \$23 billion budget because these taxpayer dollars are not being spent on issues important to them.

DO lift up messages that highlight that EVERYONE deserves to have their rights and dignity respected.

Jails aren't just bad for immigrants; they are bad for everyone. The criminal legal system and the immigration system work in tandem in ways that perpetuate cycles of harm—particularly against communities of color. Rather than criminalizing people, we need to send a message that we are all safer when everyone's rights are respected and people have access to the resources they need to thrive.

DO offer alternatives.

Many survey respondents believe the American immigration system doesn't work and that there is a "problem"—defined in different ways for different people—to be solved. Many people will be less comfortable with the idea of cutting funding for ICE and CBP when we don't present them with a vision for a different approach.

Which leads to our last recommendation:

DO describe your vision for a humane immigration system that does not jail people.

Many survey respondents were receptive to the message that we need a new approach to immigration. In fact, the majority of respondents support access to community-based case management and other supportive services—where people looking to adjust their immigration status can stay with their family or friends—rather than holding people in jails or detention centers. Starting with this shared goal can open the door to conversations that illustrate your vision for a more just and humane system, one that defunds ICE and CBP and shifts funding to community well-being.

It's critical that we stop funding cruelty against immigrants and demand our members of Congress invest in community priorities. Using effective messages like these can help persuade others to join the call to defund hate and build support for more humane immigration policies that respect the rights and dignity of all people.

Visit afsc.org/defund-hate to learn more about the Defund Hate Coalition



**American Friends
Service Committee**

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the Quaker belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.