

Tell Clearfield County Commissioners: No New Mega-Detention Facility in PA!

Direct Link to Toolkit: <https://bit.ly/NoMoPA>

Direct Link to Petition: <https://bit.ly/ICEOutOfPA2>

Without notice to the public, Clearfield County commissioners agreed to contract with ICE and Geo Group to operate what would be the largest detention center in the northeast.

As we tried to find out more, we found out that the commissioners settled the agreement with ICE and Geo Group without posting the agenda for the meeting. That's a violation of the state Sunshine Act, which mandates transparency in government affairs. This is why, last week, we sued the Clearfield County commissioners on behalf of the immigrant advocacy group JUNTOS and two county residents, demanding that the commissioners hold a public hearing about the proposed immigration center.

In response to this lawsuit, the county scheduled a meeting to provide the public with a chance to comment on these two contracts with only 48 hours notice. That meeting is on Wednesday, November 3 at 2pm in Clearfield County. This is NOT enough time to make a deliberate decision on opening a center that will have a detrimental impact on communities across PA, the rest of the country and beyond. We need to stop the opening of the detention center before it becomes operationalized in December.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO HELP CANCEL THE CONTRACT WITH ICE AND GEO GROUP.

What can you do?

- Attend the in-person commissioners meeting in Clearfield County, PA on November 3 at 2pm. Please contact daisy@vamosjuntos.org as soon as possible if you are interested in traveling from Philadelphia to Clearfield. If you plan to head over there yourself, you can contact us for details on where to meet in Clearfield before heading over to the hearing together.
- If you can't attend the in-person meeting, you can still show your opposition to the opening of Moshannon detention center by calling/emailing the county commissioners
 - Commision President | John Sobel ~ jsobel@clearfieldco.org (814) 765-2642 EXT 3005
 - Commissioner | Tony Scotto ~ tscotto@clearfieldco.org (814) 765-2642 EXT (call office number to be connected with their direct line)
 - Commissioner | David Glass (D) ~ dglass@clearfieldco.org (814) 765-2642 EXT (call office number to be connected with their direct line)
- [Sign the petition which we will hand to the commissioners in-person tomorrow](#)

- Spread the word on social media! See sample social media that you can use along with some graphics.

Sample social media posts

Last week, @aclupa sued Clearfield County commissioners on behalf of two residents and @Vamos_Juntos for signing an immigrant detention center contract with ICE without allowing for public comments. #Not1More #ICEOutOfPA #CommunitiesNotCages #FreeThemAll Learn more >> <https://www.facebook.com/events/433955041691533/>

Clearfield County commissioners are finally allowing public comment regarding an immigration detention center contract with ICE. Tell them to vote “No!” #Not1More #ICEOutOfPA #CommunitiesNotCages #FreeThemAll <https://www.facebook.com/events/433955041691533/>

When @POTUS was on the campaign trail, he made a promise to end federal private prison contracts. So why are ICE, GEO Group, and Clearfield County trying to establish a new immigrant detention center in Moshannon Valley? #Not1More #ICEOutOfPA #CommunitiesNotCages #FreeThemAll <https://www.facebook.com/events/433955041691533/>

Tell Clearfield County commissioners to cancel their contract with ICE and GEO Group to establish an immigration detention center in Moshannon Valley. #Not1More #ICEOutOfPA #CommunitiesNotCages #FreeThemAll <https://www.facebook.com/events/433955041691533/>

We want #ICEOutOfPA! We oppose the opening of new detention centers in PA! Sign this petition to help us get the message to Clearfield County Commissioners: <https://bit.ly/NoMoPA> #CommunitiesNotCages #FreeThemAll #WeAreHome

Social Media Graphics



Testimony/Organizational Talking points

County needs more transparency and engagement on this before they make a decision

- As elected officials, the Clearfield County commissioners are obligated by law to inform the public of their business. In approving these contracts with ICE and GEO, they failed to do that.
- The state Sunshine Act requires the commissioners to post the agenda for a voting meeting on the county's website at least 24 hours in advance. The commissioners did not post their agenda for their meeting on September 28, when the contracts were approved.
- Transparency is a key component of democracy. The county commissioners are empowered by their constituents and have an obligation to give the public advance

notice of what is being considered. This then gives the public an opportunity to offer their views on the commissioners' business.

- The commissioners communicated privately with both ICE and GEO but not with the public. Anyone who was skeptical of the planned opening of Moshannon Valley for immigration detention did not have the opportunity to say so.
- While we are grateful for this special meeting, one meeting to deliberate on this is not enough. This is a huge decision with big ramifications. Please do not vote today on the contracts, vote to suspend them pending further deliberation.
- We know the county commissioners really believe this will be good for the local economy, but you need to do your homework on this. While Geo promises jobs and economic growth, the data does not actually support this. Given that private prisons are corporations that seek to maximize their profits, it is no wonder they are trying to maximize profits over people.
- Social scientists conducted an expansive study to look at what is often assumed to be true - prisons bring economic growth to rural communities. Their research examined nearly 30 years of data about prisons in communities across the country and found that prisons rarely help foster economic growth in rural communities.¹
- They are only paying the county \$200,000 a year for this agreement - but the county is contractually obligated to provide emergency services to the facility. This includes responding to weather emergencies, fires, and other crisis situations.
- Local communities often do not understand the costs they are agreeing to bear. When this came up in Washington state, the fire chief realized how much was expected of them without any real resources, which is why they ended up negotiating for more financial support.² But here, the county just signed a blanket MOU.
- The last time Geo closed Moshannon, they stuck Philipsburg Borough with a \$7,000 bill for sewage. The borough had to cover this cost.
- Geo relies on a "voluntary work program" that pays people who are detained there only \$1 a day. This shows how Geo is about making money, not about supporting the local community. They'd rather exploit a detained workforce than give local people jobs. And

¹ See The Prison Industry: Carceral Expansion and Employment in U.S. Counties, 1969–1994 Social Science Quarterly. See also

<https://www.vera.org/in-our-backyards-stories/the-fox-designing-the-henhouse>

²

<https://seattleglobalist.com/2015/03/18/northwest-detention-center-tsunami-disaster-evacuation-tacoma/34981>

that practice is in peril - a federal jury in Washington state recently found that this practice violated the state's minimum wage law.³

The Harms of Immigration Detention

- Immigration detention is dehumanizing. There are well-documented cases of abuse against people in immigration detention, including in facilities here in Pennsylvania and in facilities managed by GEO Group. People held in immigration detention have been subjected to medical neglect, including exposure to COVID-19 and other viruses, and physical and sexual violence.
- The current immigration detention system deprives people who are immigrants of their freedom and liberty and separates them from their loved ones. People who are held in civil immigration detention should be home with their families while their cases proceed; release is permitted under ICE's own guidance and well within their authority.

It contradicts campaign promises

- During the campaign, President Biden spoke out against both private prisons and Donald Trump's cruel approach to immigration. By agreeing to open Moshannon Valley for immigration detention, in cooperation with GEO, his administration is turning its back on his own promises.

It would be a mega facility managed by a particularly bad local ICE field office

- With nearly 1900 beds, Moshannon will be the largest immigration detention facility in the Northeast and is likely to become the hub of immigration detention in the region. It will be overseen by ICE's Philadelphia field office, which has the lowest rate of release by parole in the country. The leaders of the Philly field office are hostile to immigrant communities.

3

<https://www.atg.wa.gov/news/news-releases/ag-ferguson-jury-finds-geo-profit-operator-tacoma-ice-detention-center-must-pay>