



The Math of Immigration Detention:

*Runaway Costs for Immigration Detention Do
Not Add Up to Sensible Policies*

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Executive Summary

One symptom of our broken immigration system is the exorbitant spending wasted on the detention of immigrants. The vast majority of these immigrants, if ever Congress acted to reform our immigration system, would be encouraged to stay and continue contributing to our economy. Even for those who must eventually be removed, billions of dollars could be saved if the government properly allocated resources towards more humane and cost-effective alternative methods of monitoring. Physical detention, as costly as it is, should only be used in limited circumstances, such as for holding immigrants whose release would pose a serious danger to the community. For the majority of immigrants, the government could use less expensive alternatives to detention prior to removal.

A cost-effective approach to monitoring immigrants who face removal is unlikely to be implemented as long as Congress continues to throw money at the detention operations of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), located in the Department of Homeland Security. For the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2011 (Fiscal Year 2012), the House of Representatives has approved a budget of \$2.75 *billion* for Detention and Removal—more than \$184 million more than the previous year and enough for ICE to keep 34,000 immigrants detained at any one time.

The Obama Administration's most recent request to Congress for immigration detention alone amounts to \$5.5 million per day spent on immigration detention (the House *increased* that amount). The current cost to detain an immigrant is approximately \$166 per day at a capacity of 33,400 detention beds.

Less wasteful alternatives to detention range in cost from as low as 30 cents to \$14 a day. If only individuals convicted of serious crimes were detained and the less expensive alternative methods were used to monitor the rest of the detained population, taxpayers could save more than over \$1.6 billion—over an 80% reduction in annual costs. The government should focus on expanding its alternatives to detention program and reforming its immigration laws. An examination of the numbers makes it clear—the dollars spent to detain immigrants do not add up to something that makes sense.

An Overview of Immigrant Detention Costs

The Department of Homeland Security's system of immigration detention, operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), is expected to cost taxpayers over \$2 billion in FY 2012.¹ This number represents a \$254 million increase from FY 2010.² This more than \$2 billion pot of money provides ICE with funding to maintain its current detention capacity of 33,400 people in over 250 facilities³ on any given night, including operational expenses,⁴ at an average of \$5.5 million per day.⁵

Two figures are used in calculating the average daily cost of immigration detention per person: \$122 per bed is the number ICE commonly provides for detention costs,⁶ but \$166 per bed includes ICE's operational expenses.⁷

- \$2,023,827,000 FY 2012 Presidential annual budget request / 365 days in a year = \$5.5 million per day
- \$5.5 million per day / 33,400 immigrant detainees = \$166 daily cost to tax payers per immigrant detainee.⁸

The exorbitant costs associated with immigration detention result from the dramatic growth of this industry in recent years. The number of detention beds has nearly doubled over the past seven years, from 18,000 in 2004 to the current capacity of 33,400.⁹ From 2001 to 2010 the total number of immigrants who pass through ICE detention per year has also nearly doubled, from 209,000 individuals in 2001 to almost 392,000 individuals in 2010.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the House of Representatives has passed a budget for Fiscal Year 2012 that, if it survives the Senate, would spend even more to jail immigrants, raising the number of detention beds to 34,000.¹¹

¹ Dep't of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Salaries and Expenses, Fiscal Year 2012 Congressional Budget Justification, p. 33, available at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs-congressional-budget-justification-fy2012.pdf>; DHS requested \$2,023,827,000 for FY 2012, however, in H.R. 2017, the House of Representatives increased the proposed amount for immigration detention by \$27 million in order to increase the number of detention beds to 34,000 – H.R. 2017 has been referred to the Senate for approval. See Appropriations Committee Releases Fiscal Year 2012 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, available at <http://appropriations.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=244865>.

² National Immigration Forum, "The President's FY2012 Budget Department of Homeland Security," available at <http://www.immigrationforum.org/images/uploads/2011/FY2012DHSBudgetSummary.pdf>.

³ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Report on Immigration in the United States: Detention and Due Process" (December 2010), p. 132, available at <http://cidh.org/pdf%20files/ReportOnImmigrationInTheUnited%20States-DetentionAndDueProcess.pdf>.

⁴ Dep't of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Salaries and Expenses, Fiscal Year 2012 Congressional Budget Justification, p. 57, available at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs-congressional-budget-justification-fy2012.pdf>.

⁵ See, id.

⁶ Id.

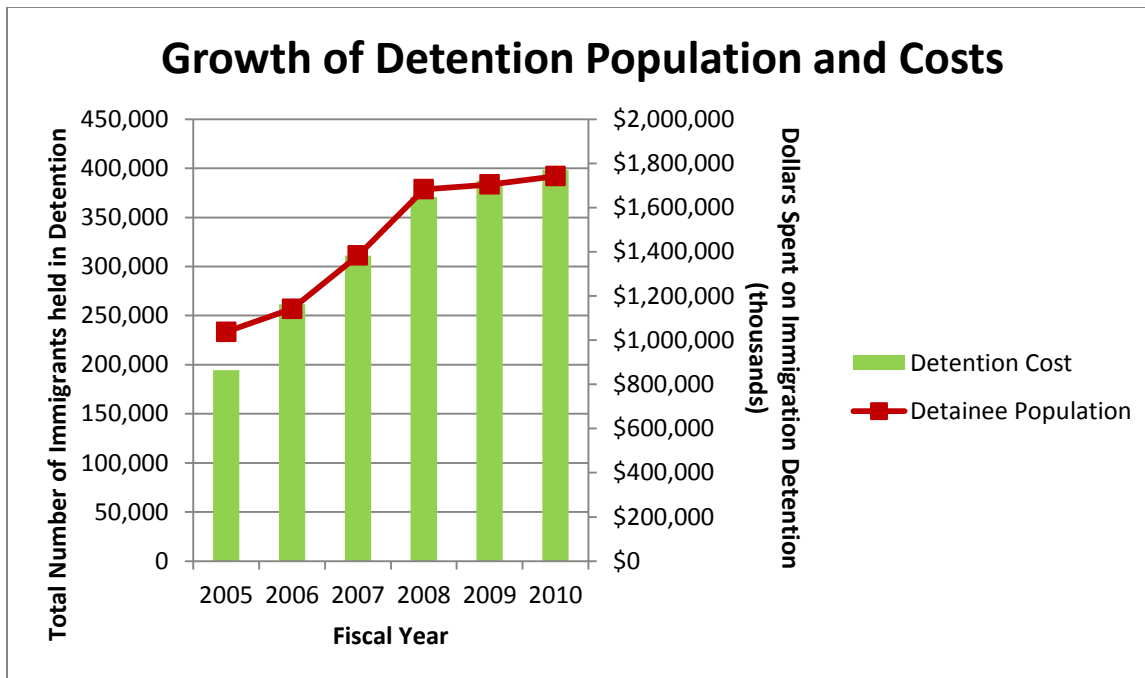
⁷ In calculating bed rates, collateral costs need to be accounted for as well. ICE officially projects bed cost at \$122, however this figure excludes payroll costs for employees who operate the detention system. If payroll is included, the cost of detention beds increases to \$166 per bed—a more accurate assessment. See, id.

⁸ The average daily population of detention centers is typically below the maximum capacity, thus if calculated for actual population numbers, the daily cost of detaining an individual would be even higher. See, Dep't of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Total Removals (May 2011), available at <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/pdf/ero-removals.pdf>.

⁹ See, Dep't of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, Detention and Removal of Illegal Aliens (April 2006), p. 5, available at http://www.dhs.gov/xoig/assets/mgmttrpts/OIG_06-33_Apr06.pdf.

¹⁰ ACLU, "Securely Insecure: The Real Costs, Consequences & Human Face of Immigration Detention" (January 2011), available at http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/1.14.11_Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL_o.pdf.

¹¹ Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, 2012, Committee Report 112-91, available at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-112hrpt91/pdf/CRPT-112hrpt91.pdf>.



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Although ICE says that its policy is to prioritize apprehension and detention of individuals convicted of serious criminal offenses, 65% of immigrants who were detained and deported from 1996 to 2006 were detained after being arrested for non-violent crimes.¹³ In 2009 and 2010, over half of all immigrant detainees had no criminal records.¹⁴ Of those with any criminal history, nearly 20% were merely for traffic offenses.¹⁵

As a result of the burgeoning immigrant detainee population, increased strain has been placed on state and local jails that hold immigrant detainees on behalf of ICE. This is due to the majority of immigrant detainees being housed in space ICE rents from approximately 250 state and local jails.¹⁶ In addition, ICE currently owns and operates six detention facilities, called Service Processing Centers (SPCs).¹⁷ ICE is considering closing its SPCs for lower cost options.¹⁸

¹² See, Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, “Growth in Number Detained,” Syracuse Univ. (Feb. 11, 2010), available at <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/224/include/4g.html>; See, Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, “Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Budget Expenditures,” Syracuse Univ. (Feb. 11, 2010), available at <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/224/include/3.html>; See also, Detention Watch Network, “The Influence of the Private Prison Industry in the Immigration Detention Business” (May 2011), available at <http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/PrivatePrisonPDF-FINAL%2005-11-11.pdf>.

¹³ ACLU, “Securely Insecure: The Real Costs, Consequences & Human Face of Immigration Detention” (January 2011), available at http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/1.14.11_Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL_o.pdf.

¹⁴ Id.; Dep’t of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Immigration Enforcement Actions: 2010 (June 2011), available at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/enforcement-ar-2010.pdf>.

¹⁵ ACLU, “Securely Insecure: The Real Costs, Consequences & Human Face of Immigration Detention” (January 2011), available at http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/1.14.11_Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL_o.pdf; Dep’t of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Immigration Enforcement Actions: 2010 (June 2011), available at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/enforcement-ar-2010.pdf>.

¹⁶ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, “Report on Immigration in the United States: Detention and Due Process” (December 2010), p. 132, available at <http://cidh.org/pdf%20files/ReportOnImmigrationInTheUnited%20States-DetentionAndDueProcess.pdf>.

¹⁷ Located in Batavia, New York; El Centro, California; El Paso, Texas; Florence, Arizona; Miami, Florida; and Los Fresnos, Texas. El Paso is currently being converted to office space and El Centro is being considered for co-location of ICE field offices. Dep’t of

Privatization of ICE-owned Detention Facilities

The expansion of the immigrant detention system has benefitted the private prison industry. Corrections Corporations of America (CCA) is the largest ICE detention contractor. It operates a total of fourteen ICE-contracted facilities with a total of 14,556 beds.¹⁹ GEO Group, Inc., the second largest ICE contractor, operates seven facilities with a total of 7,183 beds.²⁰ In 2010, CCA and GEO reported annual revenues of \$1.69 billion and \$1.17 billion respectively.²¹ Furthermore, GEO recently purchased BI Incorporated, a company that has lucrative government contracts with ICE to administer its alternatives to detention program.²²

Private prison corporations have also exerted their influence on legislators by lobbying for laws that detain immigrants more frequently and for longer periods of time.²³ For the five corporations with ICE detention contracts for which federal lobbying records are available, the total lobbying expenditure for 1999 through 2009 was over \$20 million.²⁴ The cozy relationships between legislators and private prison corporations are perhaps best illustrated by Arizona's controversial S.B. 1070 bill, which was drafted in the presence of officials from CCA.²⁵ Of the 36 co-sponsors of S.B. 1070, 30 received campaign contributions from private prison lobbyists or companies, including CCA.²⁶

The influence of private prison corporations is even more troubling given the lax standards used to operate these facilities. ICE detention standards, designed to guide the operation of detention facilities, do not expressly apply to many of the facilities under contract with ICE.²⁷ Given the lack of strict standards and proper oversight at these facilities, sub-par conditions at these locations come as little surprise. Complaints have been persistent and numerous, including sexual abuse,²⁸ inadequate access to translators, prolonged detention, and insufficient medical treatment.²⁹

Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Salaries and Expenses, Fiscal Year 2012 Congressional Budget Justification, p. 33, available at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs-congressional-budget-justification-fy2012.pdf>

¹⁸ Id.

¹⁹ Detention Watch Network, "The Influence of the Private Prison Industry in Immigration Detention" (May 2011), available at <http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/privateprisons>.

²⁰ Id.

²¹ The data necessary to determine how much revenue came directly from ICE contracts is unavailable to the public. Id.

²² See, The GEO Group Announces Acquisition of BI Incorporated, available at http://bi.com/geo_group_announces_acquisition_of_bi_incorporated.

²³ ACLU, "Securely Insecure: The Real Costs, Consequences & Human Face of Immigration Detention" (January 2011), available at http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/1.14.11_Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL_o.pdf.

²⁴ Detention Watch Network, "The Influence of the Private Prison Industry in the Immigration Detention Business" (May 2011), available at <http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/PrivatePrisonPDF-FINAL%205-11-11.pdf>.

²⁵ Laura Sullivan, "Prison Economics Help Drive Ariz. Immigration Law," NPR, (Oct. 28, 2010), available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130833741>.

²⁶ Justice Policy Institute, "Gaming the System" (June 22, 2011), p. 30, available at http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/gaming_the_system.pdf.

²⁷ ACLU, "Securely Insecure: The Real Costs, Consequences & Human Face of Immigration Detention" (January 2011), available at http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/1.14.11_Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL_o.pdf.

²⁸ Between the creation of ICE detention centers in 2003 and August 2010, there have been more than 15 separate documented incidents and allegations of sexual assault, abuse, or harassment, involving more than 50 alleged detainee victims. See, National Immigration Forum, "Summaries of Recent Reports on Immigration Detention" (June 2011) p. 11, available at <http://www.immigrationforum.org/images/uploads/2010/DetentionReportSummaries.pdf> citing Human Rights Watch, "Detained and at Risk" (August 2010).

²⁹ See generally, National Immigration Forum, Summaries of Recent Reports on Immigration Detention (June 2011), available at <http://www.immigrationforum.org/images/uploads/2010/DetentionReportSummaries.pdf>.

Health Issues in Immigration Detention Facilities

As the number of immigrant detainees has grown, the cost of medical care in detention centers has increased as well. Between FY 2003 and FY 2007, detainee medical care costs have increased 83%, from \$50 million to \$92 million.³⁰ From October 2006 to March 2009, ICE received over 110,000 requests for offsite medical care.³¹ However, despite the increased expenditures on healthcare, immigration detention facilities continue to exhibit serious problems.

A number of studies have investigated the health conditions at immigration detention facilities and have consistently found deplorable conditions and inadequate medical care. An investigative report done by the Washington Post in 2008 found the deaths of 30 immigration detainees to be under ‘questionable’ circumstances. The average age of these deceased detainees was just 36 years.³² A total of 121 detainees have died in ICE custody between the creation of DHS in October 2003 and April 29, 2011—an average of one detainee death approximately every 23 days.³³ Many of these detainees died from conditions that would have responded to proper timely treatment.³⁴

Health issues are also prevalent within private facilities. From October 2003 through February 7, 2009 there were 18 deaths in facilities operated by CCA alone.³⁵ CCA's Eloy Detention Facility in Arizona has had more deaths than any other immigration jail.³⁶

Despite the amount of money spent by ICE to detain immigrants, inadequate medical care in ICE detention is a chronic complaint. Current medical standards focus on short-term, emergency care, even though in FY 2008, DHS found 34% of detained immigrants suffered from a chronic health problem, such as diabetes, hypertension, or tuberculosis.³⁷ Mental health issues also go untreated—reports indicate that 2% to 5% of the detainees suffer from serious and persistent mental illness, and as many as 16%

³⁰ During this period the total annual detained population grew by 34%. The average daily detention population grew by 43%. Congressional Research Service, Healthcare for Noncitizens in Immigration Detention (June 2008), p. 17, available at http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL34556_20080627.pdf.

³¹ See, Dep't of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, The U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement Process for Authorizing Medical Care for Immigration Detainees (December 2009), p. 1, available at http://www.dhs.gov/xoig/assets/mgmt/rpts/OIG_10-23_Dec09.pdf.

³² Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, “Report on Immigration in the United States: Detention and Due Process” (December 2010), p. 97, available at <http://cidh.org/pdf%20files/ReportOnImmigrationInTheUnited%20States-DetentionAndDueProcess.pdf> citing Washington Post, “Careless Detention: A Closer Look At 83 Deaths” (May 10, 2008), available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/immigration/map.html>.

³³ 2768 days / 121 deaths = 22.8 days. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, List of Deaths in ICE Custody: October 2003 – April 29, 2011, available at <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/reports/detaineedeaths2003-present.pdf>.

³⁴ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, “Report on Immigration in the United States: Detention and Due Process” (December 2010), p. 97, available at <http://cidh.org/pdf%20files/ReportOnImmigrationInTheUnited%20States-DetentionAndDueProcess.pdf>.

³⁵ Azadeh N. Shahshahani, “Private Prisons for Immigrants Lack Accountability, Oversight,” American Civil Liberties Union, (June 11, 2009), available at <http://www.aclu.org/2009/06/11/private-prisons-for-immigrants-lack-accountability-oversight>.

³⁶ See, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, List of Deaths in ICE Custody: October 2003 – April 29, 2011, available at <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/reports/detaineedeaths2003-present.pdf>; Graeme Wood, “A Boom Behind Bars,” Bloomberg Businessweek, (March 25, 2011) available at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42197813/ns/business-us_business/t/boom-behind-bars/.

³⁷ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, “Report on Immigration in the United States: Detention and Due Process” (December 2010), p. 99, available at <http://cidh.org/pdf%20files/ReportOnImmigrationInTheUnited%20States-DetentionAndDueProcess.pdf>.

may have needed mental health services.³⁸ That means more than 62,000 people per year may need mental health services in immigration detention.³⁹

Despite the dire need for medical assistance, staffing remains a problem for ICE.⁴⁰ For example, although ICE Health Services Corp (IHSC) added additional mental health positions in recent years, in August 2010, 41% of these positions were still vacant.⁴¹ Variances in the ratio of mental health providers to mentally ill detainees can range from 1:8 to 1:53 depending on the detention center.⁴²

Alternatives to Detention

Given the expenses and concerns surrounding detention, more humane and cost-effective alternatives should be pursued. Many immigrants can be monitored with alternative methods, such as telephonic and in-person reporting, curfews, and home visits.⁴³ Alternatives can range in cost from as low as 30 cents up to 14 dollars a day per individual.⁴⁴ Currently ICE's Alternatives to Detention (ATD) program has two primary components: Full-Service (FS) in which contractors provide the equipment and monitoring services along with case management, or Technology-Assisted (TA) in which the contractor provides the equipment but ICE continues to supervise the participants.⁴⁵

As of January 22, 2011, there were 13,583 participants in the FS category and 3,871 in the TA category.⁴⁶ ICE received \$72.3 million for ATDs in FY 2012, a \$2.8 million increase from FY 2010.⁴⁷

However there still remains significant room for expansion. ATDs have a very high compliance rate among participants. In FY 2010, ATDs exceeded the target for appearance rates for Immigration Hearings by 35.8 percent: the target was 58 percent and the actual FY 2010 rate was 93.8 percent.⁴⁸ A further expansion of ATDs could substantially reduce the number of immigrants in detention and thereby lower detention costs.⁴⁹

³⁸ Id.

³⁹ 16% of detainees (0.16) * 392,000 detainees per year = 62,720 detainees requiring mental health services per year.

⁴⁰ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Report on Immigration in the United States: Detention and Due Process" (December 2010), p. 104, available at <http://cidh.org/pdf%20files/ReportOnImmigrationInTheUnited%20States-DetentionAndDueProcess.pdf>.

⁴¹ See, Dep't of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General, Management of Mental Health Cases in Immigration Detention (March 2011), p. 8, available at http://www.dhs.gov/xoig/assets/mgmttrpts/OIG_11-62_Mar11.pdf.

⁴² See, id. at 11.

⁴³ Anil Kalhan, Columbia Law Review, "Rethinking Immigration Detention" (July, 21, 2010), p. 55, available at http://www.columbialawreview.org/assets/sidebar/volume/110/42_Anil_Kalhan.pdf.

⁴⁴ See generally, id.

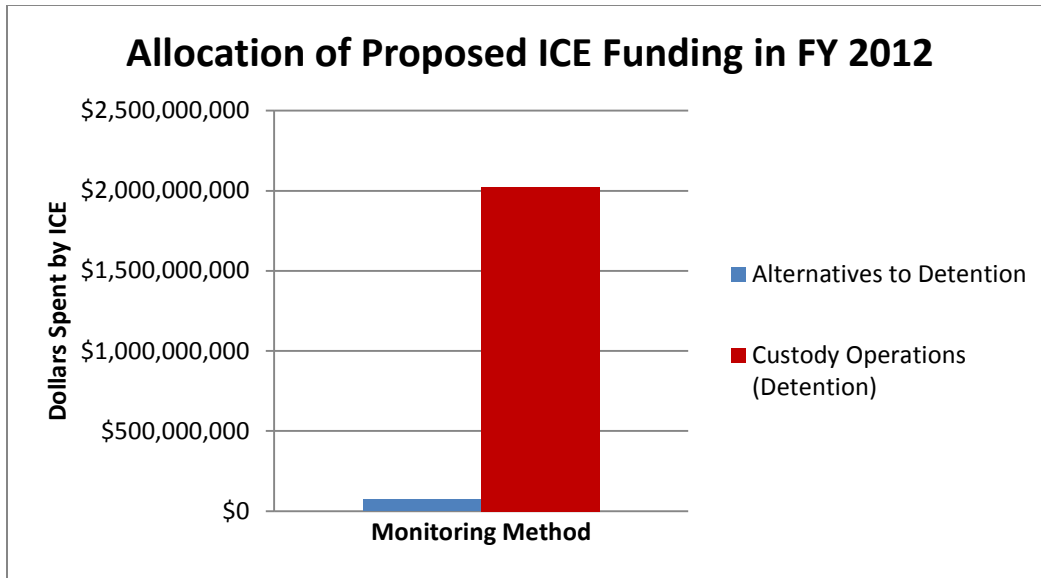
⁴⁵ Dep't of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Salaries and Expenses, Fiscal Year 2012 Congressional Budget Justification, p. 43, available at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs-congressional-budget-justification-fy2012.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Id.

⁴⁷ Id.

⁴⁸ Id. at 44.

⁴⁹ See Dep't of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Salaries and Expenses, Fiscal Year 2012 Congressional Budget Justification, p. 33, 43, available at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs-congressional-budget-justification-fy2012.pdf>.



Persistent questions surround the population that ICE is enrolling into ATDs. The majority of immigration detainees do not pose a threat to the general public.⁵⁰ Only 11% of detainees have committed what ICE considers to be violent crimes.⁵¹ Currently, ICE uses electronic monitoring on individuals who pose no danger and are a very low flight risk and could simply be released on bond or their own recognizance. Additionally, ICE could use electronic monitoring to mitigate flight risk in the cases of many detainees where that is the only obstacle to release. Even if the most expensive alternative programs⁵² were used to monitor the 89% of detainees who are non-violent, a tremendous amount of resources and money would be saved. ICE could save over \$4.4 million dollars a night if they only detained individuals who have committed violent crimes. This would result in an annual savings of over \$1.6 billion—an 80% reduction in costs.⁵³ (\$4,473,952 saved each night * 365 = \$1,632,992,480 savings per year or a savings of over 80.6%⁵⁴)

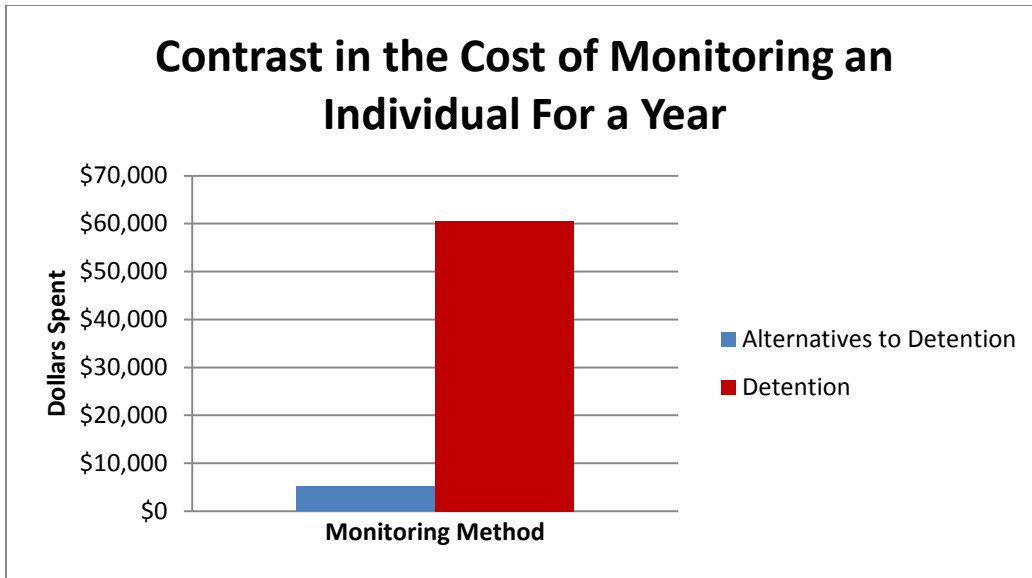
⁵⁰See generally, Dora Schriro, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Immigration Detention Overview and Recommendations (Oct. 2009), p. 2, available at <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/odpp/pdf/ice-detention-rpt.pdf>.

⁵¹ National Immigration Forum, “Immigrants Behind Bars: How, Why, and How Much?” (March 2011), available at http://www.immigrationforum.org/images/uploads/2011/Immigrants_in_Local_Jails.pdf citing Dora Schriro, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Immigration Detention Overview and Recommendations (Oct. 2009), p. 2.

⁵² Dep’t of Homeland Security, ICE Detention Reform: Principles and Next Steps (Oct. 2009), available at http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/press_ice_detention_reform_fact_sheet.pdf.

⁵³ 11% of detainees have committed violent crimes (.11) * 33,400 detainees per night = 3,674 violent detainees per night. 33,400 detainees per night – 3,674 violent detainees = 29,726 nonviolent detainees. 29,726 nonviolent detainees * \$14 a day for alternative detention procedures = \$416,164 a day to monitor nonviolent detainees. 3,674 violent detainees * \$166 a day for detention = \$609,884 a day to detain violent detainees. \$416,164 on alternatives to detention for nonviolent detainees + \$609,884 on detention for violent detainees = \$1,026,048 a night to monitor and detain. \$5,500,000 currently spent each night to detain immigrants - \$1,026,048 a night if only detaining those who committed violent crimes = \$4,473,952 saved each night. \$4,473,952 saved each night * 365 = \$1,632,992,480 savings per year or a savings of over 80.6%.

⁵⁴ \$14 a day for alternative detention procedures * 365 days a year = \$5,110 a year to monitor an individual using alternatives, \$166 a day to detain an individual * 365 days a year = \$60,590 a year to detain an individual. See, Dep’t of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Salaries and Expenses, Fiscal Year 2012 Congressional Budget Justification, p. 33, 43, available at <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs-congressional-budget-justification-fy2012.pdf>.



Case Study

Leticia Salguero-Morales is the single mother of two U.S. citizen children. Originally from Guatemala, she has lived in Phoenix, Arizona for over 20 years and has never been arrested for or convicted of any crime. Ms. Salguero entered removal proceedings for entering the United States without inspection. Although she received a final order of removal in 2004, Ms. Salguero was not notified by her lawyer and had no knowledge of the decision until January 2009, when she was apprehended by ICE officials and placed into immigration detention.

Despite her clean record and family ties, Ms. Salguero’s requests for release from detention were denied. For more than one year, she was not allowed to have contact visits with her children or have access to outdoor recreation. As a result, Ms. Salguero sank into a state of extreme depression and anxiety. At no point was she granted a bond hearing before a judge to determine whether her continued detention was justified. Finally, in September 2010, a district court ordered ICE to determine whether Ms. Salguero could be released under its guidelines regarding detention priorities and she was subsequently released on conditional supervision.

Ms. Salguero was detained for 21 months. At a cost of \$166 a day, her detention cost tax payers over \$100,000. (21 months or 638 days * \$166 daily detention cost = \$105,908 to detain Ms. Salguero.) These costs could have been avoided or reduced had an alternative to detention been employed. Furthermore, the emotional, mental, and physical stress that Ms. Salguero and her family dealt with could have easily been avoided as well.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ See, ACLU, Written Statements for a hearing on “Providing for the Detention of Dangerous Aliens” (May 2011), p. 33, available at http://www.aclu.org/files/assets/Testimony_of_Ahilan_Arulanantham_FINAL.pdf.

Conclusion

At a time of increased attention to fiscal accountability by the Federal Government, immigration detention raises a significant number of fiscal concerns. The urgency for an alternative approach is further fueled by numerous humanitarian concerns endemic to immigration detention. ICE must reexamine and modify its current procedures, including maximizing its alternatives to detention programs to take advantage of cost savings. A close examination of the figures makes it clear: the numbers behind immigration detention simply do not add up to sensible policy.