

✳ ABOUT THE MYTHICAL SPIRIT OF PURSUIT

JURISPRUDENCE

## I Went to One of Trump's Mass Deportation Warehouses. It Was Eerie.

BY SHIRIN ALI

FOLLOW SHIRIN

MARCH 12, 2026 • 5:45 AM



### We Care About Your Privacy

We and our **317** partners store and access personal data, like browsing data or unique identifiers, on your device. Selecting I Accept enables tracking technologies to support the purposes shown under we and our partners process data to provide. Selecting Reject All or withdrawing your consent will disable them. If trackers are disabled, some content and ads you see may not be as relevant to you. You can resurface this menu to change your choices or withdraw consent at any time by clicking the Manage Preferences link on the bottom of the webpage. Your choices will have effect within our Website. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy.

#### We and our partners process data to provide:

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

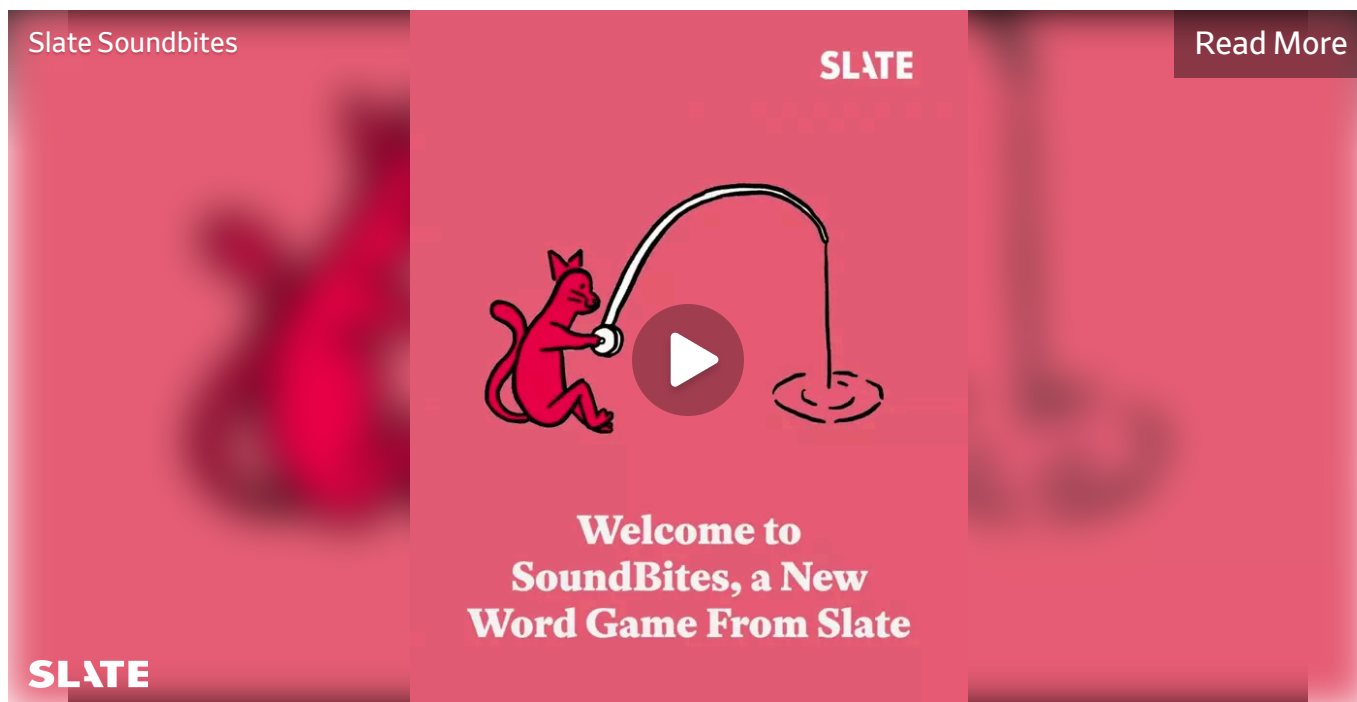
#### List of Partners (vendors)

I Accept

Reject All

Show Purpose

data tells us that not only have arrests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement risen drastically compared to during the Biden administration, but agents are disproportionately arresting immigrants without criminal records, and targeting refugees, green-card holders, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program recipients, and even U.S. citizens. More horrifyingly, a record number of people have died while in ICE custody in fiscal year 2026. Despite this brazen unlawfulness, Trump is forging full speed ahead and his endgame is coming into clear view: a dystopian United States, stripped of any immigrants and littered with warehouses detaining everyone the administration deems un-American.



These stakes sound hyperbolic, but they were illustrated very clearly on Tuesday in the Senate testimony of the director of immigration studies at the libertarian Cato Institute, David J. Bier, who noted that the Department of Homeland Security has “joked” about

## We Care About Your Privacy

We and our **317** partners store and access personal data, like browsing data or unique identifiers, on your device. Selecting I Accept enables tracking technologies to support the purposes shown under we and our partners process data to provide. Selecting Reject All or withdrawing your consent will disable them. If trackers are disabled, some content and ads you see may not be as relevant to you. You can resurface this menu to change your choices or withdraw consent at any time by clicking the Manage Preferences link on the bottom of the webpage. Your choices will have effect within our Website. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

facilities—industrial warehouses—into detention facilities. “For ICE to sustain the anticipated increase in enforcement operations and arrests in 2026, an increase in detention capacity will be a necessary downstream requirement,” the document concluded. This plan seemingly represents the sentiment behind acting ICE director Todd Lyons’ comments last year in which he explained that he’d like to revamp America’s immigration system to be one “like [Amazon] Prime, but with human beings.” While the White House has reportedly been seeking to downplay this deportation agenda publicly amid a political backlash to its failed Minneapolis “surge,” the warehouses put lie to the notion that the administration is backing down in any way.

So far, ICE has spent roughly \$895 million on 10 warehouses all over the country, with seven sales still in progress, according to data compiled by Project Salt Box, a public advocacy group tracking DHS’ warehouse project. These purchase decisions are being made by fiat, as federally owned property is often exempt from local permitting and zoning rules. ICE has, more often than not, left local leaders in the dark about its plans. Mayors and town councils are finding out after the fact, when purchase agreements are nearly final, with virtually no opportunity to offer input on whether a community has the resources to support a detention center, let alone address residents’ concerns about having such a facility in their backyards.

Americans, whether they voted for Trump or not, almost all seem to agree that they do not want these detention centers in their neighborhoods. Quickly understanding the strain a massive facility housing thousands of people would have on a locale’s water and sewage systems, the negative environmental impacts, and a possible hit to property values, plus the morality of playing a part in a mass detention scheme, Americans have found yet another reason to coalesce against ICE. Successful public outcry has gotten ICE or property owners to back out of a warehouse sale in about half of recent cases, with Project Salt Box

## We Care About Your Privacy

We and our **317** partners store and access personal data, like browsing data or unique identifiers, on your device. Selecting I Accept enables tracking technologies to support the purposes shown under we and our partners process data to provide. Selecting Reject All or withdrawing your consent will disable them. If trackers are disabled, some content and ads you see may not be as relevant to you. You can resurface this menu to change your choices or withdraw consent at any time by clicking the Manage Preferences link on the bottom of the webpage. Your choices will have effect within our Website. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

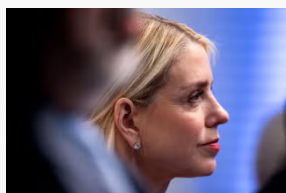
Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

conservative town was on DHS' list for a warehouse. So far, its efforts have been unsuccessful, despite a Republican mayor, all-GOP town council, and an electorate that decisively voted for Trump two years ago all collectively telling DHS officials an immigrant detention center is not welcome in Roxbury. City officials even offered the warehouse owner, Dalfen Industrial, 10 years' worth of tax abatement, totaling about \$20 million, if they agreed not to sell their warehouse to DHS. The offer was turned down.

I attended a recent protest outside of Roxbury's City Hall, where one woman told me, "This will destroy this city." She was worried that if ICE's detention center plans went through, "Roxbury will be known as the concentration town."

Over 1,000 residents from in and around Roxbury showed up to that protest on Feb. 28, and as they lined the long interstate where the small City Hall office was located, the sound of honking cars was nearly constant as drivers showed their support. And anyone could easily see the warehouse in question from the protest, just a few blocks up the street. The massive 470,000-square-foot facility was nestled in a quiet neighborhood, surrounded by homes and towering trees. One small house with a sand-colored roof had a sign stuck in the grass toward the end of its long, winding driveway: "Immigrants are welcome here."

## Related From Slate



DAHLIA LITHWICK AND MARK JOSEPH STERN

Pam Bondi's Ludicrous New Scheme to Protect Lying DOJ Lawyers

[READ MORE](#)

A stone's throw away from the Roxbury warehouse was a Mexican bakery serving

## We Care About Your Privacy

We and our **317** partners store and access personal data, like browsing data or unique identifiers, on your device. Selecting I Accept enables tracking technologies to support the purposes shown under we and our partners process data to provide. Selecting Reject All or withdrawing your consent will disable them. If trackers are disabled, some content and ads you see may not be as relevant to you. You can resurface this menu to change your choices or withdraw consent at any time by clicking the Manage Preferences link on the bottom of the webpage. Your choices will have effect within our Website. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy.

### **We and our partners process data to provide:**

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

next door. But the United States right outside that door felt cold and angry, with a president who refuses to stop tearing people away from each other.

*We hope you learned a thing or two from this edition of *Executive Dysfunction*, and if you enjoyed reading it, please consider supporting our legal journalism by becoming a Slate Plus member!*

---

## Elsewhere in Jurisprudence

- In the most recent episode of Amicus, Dahlia Lithwick unpacks how Christian nationalism made its way into the U.S. government with Rachel Laser, president and CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. In the 1950s, Christian nationalism successfully got “God” inserted into the Pledge of Allegiance and national motto, and even on U.S. dollars. By the 1980s, the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled on a series of consequential cases that changed the definition of “religious freedom,” further eroding the separation of church and state. The Roberts court then paved the way for the Trump administration’s full embrace of Christian nationalism that we’re seeing today.
- In the Slate Plus bonus episode of Amicus, Dahlia and Mark Joseph Stern discuss Attorney General Pam Bondi’s newly proposed rule that attempts to block state bar associations from investigating Justice Department lawyers who are accused of state ethics violations. Bondi’s rule is a blatant attempt to slow-walk and even stop state bar investigations into her DOJ attorneys.
- As we await a decision in the Supreme Court case *Chiles v. Salazar*, Matt R. Salmon, friend of Slate, [psvchiatrist](#), and author of *Pride & Prejudice: Healing a Division in the*

## We Care About Your Privacy

We and our **317** partners store and access personal data, like browsing data or unique identifiers, on your device. Selecting I Accept enables tracking technologies to support the purposes shown under we and our partners process data to provide. Selecting Reject All or withdrawing your consent will disable them. If trackers are disabled, some content and ads you see may not be as relevant to you. You can resurface this menu to change your choices or withdraw consent at any time by clicking the Manage Preferences link on the bottom of the webpage. Your choices will have effect within our Website. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy.

### **We and our partners process data to provide:**

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

## Get the best of news and politics

Sign up for Slate's evening newsletter.

Email address:

Send me updates about Slate special offers.

By signing up, you agree to our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms](#).

Sign Up

Slate is published by The Slate Group, a Graham Holdings Company.

### We Care About Your Privacy

We and our **317** partners store and access personal data, like browsing data or unique identifiers, on your device. Selecting I Accept enables tracking technologies to support the purposes shown under we and our partners process data to provide. Selecting Reject All or withdrawing your consent will disable them. If trackers are disabled, some content and ads you see may not be as relevant to you. You can resurface this menu to change your choices or withdraw consent at any time by clicking the Manage Preferences link on the bottom of the webpage. Your choices will have effect within our Website. For more details, refer to our Privacy Policy.

#### **We and our partners process data to provide:**

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.