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name said he was moved due to a court date.

"They lose their files, they lose their Bibles, they lose all kinds of shit in the transfer," said Gorge ICE Resistance's Schechtel. "We think that this is an intentionally disruptive process that ICE or GEO Group tends to do."

Members of the coalition believe ICE moved detainees to NORCOR to break up a hunger strike by a reported 750 detainees at the Northwest Detention Center in April. Brandenburg denies that there even was a hunger strike among ICE detainees at NORCOR. "They may have missed five or six meals, but they were supplementing that with commissary food," he says. "There really wasn't a hunger strike."

"Oh, Jesus," said the ACLU's dos Santos, when told of Brandenburg's words. "There was one person I was literally terrified was going to die."

According to PCUN's Ramirez, detainees in Tacoma's detention center are continuing to hunger strike.

Dos Santos and others opposing NORCOR's holding of ICE detainees believe some detainees may be retaliated against by ICE, The GEO Group or NORCOR, even if there's not enough evidence to make a legal case.

"We've heard of that," dos Santos said. "It's hard to connect all of the dots. But it certainly sounds like people are being treated differently based on how outspoken they are."

"There has been retaliation — there's been retaliation in Tacoma, there's been retaliation at NORCOR," Schechtel said. "They tell us that the guards verbally abuse them more, ignore their requests more."

The physical moves, limited publicly available information about inmates and the extreme difficulty required in interviewing a willing detainee could be seen as interfering with Lujan-Gonzales' First Amendment rights to free speech.

And they are practically invisible to the general public. Visiting clergy members are the only people besides attorneys permitted in-person visits.

Family members are permitted weekly 60-minute video calls, but as the ACLU's letter notes, even children are not permitted face-to-face time with their parents.

Stevens says that he has been impressed with how detainees work to help one another stick together and avoid "bullying" from corrections officers inside NORCOR, but it's tough.

"One guy that I've been meeting with since May just got deported this morning," Stevens said. "I thought he was going to hold out for a while, but I guess he just gave up. People do give up."

"It's going to work out (financially), but still, if we didn't have the money from ICE we would be at a loss to pay for the operations of NORCOR."

— BRYAN BRANDENBURG
NORCOR ADMINISTRATOR

NORCOR needs money. In the long run, ICE holds might not be enough.

NORCOR's roots go back to 1993 and efforts by officials in Wasco, Hood River, Sherman and Gilliam counties to combine efforts to fund a regional jail that would address the lack of jail beds in the area. According to the jail's website, it books 3,000 offenders per year, and its costs are borne by Wasco (50 percent), Hood River (40 percent), and Sherman and Gilliam (5 percent each).

For 2017, NORCOR's yearly operational costs are \$6.2 million, while current combined county subsidies are only \$3.8 million. The facility has contracts that bring in some additional money, but it still runs a yearly deficit close to \$1 million, according to Brandenburg.

"It's going to work out (financially), but still, if we didn't have the money

from ICE we would be at a loss to pay for the operations of NORCOR," he said.

NORCOR receives \$80 per day for each ICE detainee, records confirmed by Brandenburg show, a contract that ends in 2018 and Brandenburg said "needs to be renegotiated."

Brandenburg says NORCOR has held as many as 80 detainees and as few as five, and averages around 20. At 20 detainees average and \$80 per day,

NORCOR brings in \$584,000 per year from ICE.

Recent ballot measures aimed at shoring up NORCOR's failing budget with a new tax have narrowly missed passage.

Earlier this year, a regional jail tax rate measure was defeated by a razor-thin

margin of 14 votes, The Dalles Chronicle reports. Brandenburg said another bond measure may come to voters again in April next year, and his preference would be to pay for NORCOR's operations with taxes, not ICE money.

Some in the Gorge wonder if all the bad publicity NORCOR is getting from the protests, legal actions and media coverage might not hurt the chances of passing the next bond measure to support its operations.

"NORCOR is walking a really fine line in order to be on the good side of people who will wish them financial well-being," Boonstra said. "The more it gets out that the conditions are deplorable, that taxpayer money is being used for this purpose, the next time a bond comes to the taxpayers, there's going to be a lot more resistance."

The Get Away

by Jaison Kirk

On my way to pick up a new lady friend
My nerves alive and on fire
Thinking of the near future. Will I say the
Right things? What will conspire?
Over the phone we planned a trip
And a meal in the park
Planning the day together while apart
Both hoping love will spark.
On our way we make final plans
And a trip to the store
Digging the vibe of this new
Affair, I hope I'm not a bore
Making small talk and discoveries
As we walk the aisles
People around us can tell the newness
And we gather smiles.
Sandwiches, soft drinks, dessert, and
A loaf of bread to feed the birds.
As we relax on a blanket sharing
The day, food and words.
Together we break bread for
The birds and enjoy the show.
When the afternoon light
Grows long we pack up and go.
More comfortable by now with
Hands and eyes we start to flirt
Dropping the girl off with a kiss
Alive on fire at full alert.
As her door closes my head
Is spinning and I feel dazed
Feeling hopeful, finding a new
Friend to love. I am amazed.

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