

ICE operation appears routine, but raises ire

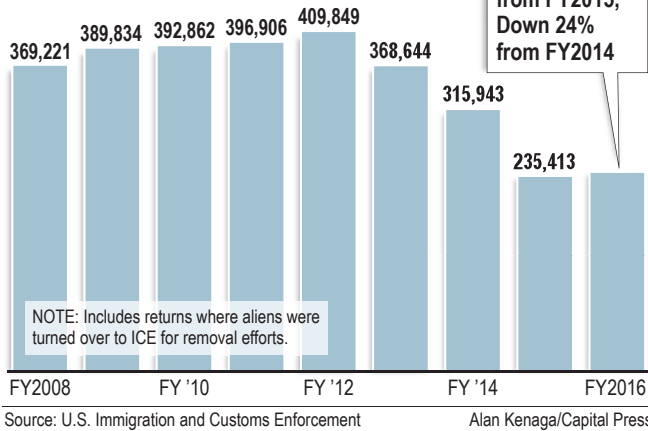
By ERIC MORTEONSON
EO Media Group

The action of federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents who detained multiple people after stopping a pair of worker transport vans near Woodburn last week may have been a routine operation, but it happened in an acrimonious political atmosphere that had civil rights groups blaming it on the Trump administration's belligerence toward immigrants.

An ICE spokeswoman said agents initially were after two people, both of whom had multiple prior arrests and one of whom had a prior conviction, when they stopped the vehicles on a highway outside Woodburn on Feb. 24. Agents detained 11 people on allegations they were in the country illegally; seven of them remained in custody Feb. 28. Four were let go because an immigration judge had previously released them on bond pending removal proceedings, the ICE spokeswoman said.

As far as ICE was concerned, the action was routine. People who are in the country illegally and have criminal records are among the highest priority for

ICE removals of illegal aliens



apprehension and removal, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

"Deportation officers conduct enforcement actions every day around the country and in Oregon as part of the agency's ongoing efforts to uphold public safety and border security," an ICE spokeswoman said in a prepared statement.

But the action comes amid heightened political tension over border security and illegal immigration. Pacific Northwest agriculture has a major stake in the outcome, as many sectors rely on pruning, harvest or

processing crews that are heavily immigrant, legal or not.

ICE provided a link to a Homeland Security memorandum that implements Trump's executive order on immigration enforcement. The memo calls for hiring 10,000 more ICE agents and prioritizes enforcement action against aliens who have been convicted of any crime, charged with a crime but not resolved, committed fraud or "willful misrepresentation" with a government agency or abused any program to receive public benefits.

It also authorizes removal of anyone who "in the judgment of an immigration officer" poses a risk to public safety or national

security. But the Portland office of American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker group, and the farmworker and forestry labor union Pineros y Compesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) criticized the action.

Pedro Sosa, spokesman for the American Friends group, said in his opinion ICE has increased its activity and is acting more aggressively since President Trump signed the order. Sosa said that has created "more fear in our community."

The immigrant advocacy groups said they were "deeply concerned" about such stops and arrests and their impact on schools, the local economy and security. The groups denounced the "racist policies" of Trump that "criminalize and scapegoat hardworking immigrants and divide Americans."

Details provided by ICE and by the immigrant advocacy groups varied somewhat.

American Friends and PCUN said 19 people were detained in the operation and 10 were released. They said the workers were on their way to forest jobs picking baby's breath, a decorative plant used in arrangements, when they were stopped.

All four Northwest senators against Perry confirmation

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — All four senators from Washington and Oregon on Thursday voted against Rick Perry to become energy secretary, saying they worried about his commitment to clean up the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington state and other issues.

But the former Texas governor was easily approved by the full Senate on a vote of 62 to 37 to join the cabinet of President Donald Trump.

The Department of Energy is responsible for the nation's nuclear arsenal and the waste left over from the production of those weapons.

Hanford, created during the Manhattan Project during World War II, for decades made plutonium, a key ingredient in nuclear weapons. That mission ended decades ago, and the site is now engaged in cleaning up the nation's largest stockpile of radioactive waste. The work expected to last for decades and cost tens of billions of dollars.

Hanford is located near Richland, about 200 miles southeast of Seattle, and about 10,000 people work on the site.

Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore. and Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., all voted against Perry's nomination. Some said they were unsure whether he was capable of overseeing the technically complex job.

"It is the federal government's moral and legal obligation and responsibility to clean up Hanford," Murray said Thursday. "It requires a deep understanding of a very large and complex cleanup project."

"(I am) not convinced that someone who just months ago supported abolishing the Energy Department understands the urgent need to clean up millions of gallons of toxic, radioactive waste."

- Sen. Ron Wyden

Murray added: "I remain deeply concerned Governor Perry — and this administration — fails to grasp what's at stake."

Wyden said he was "not convinced that someone who just months ago supported abolishing the Energy Department understands the urgent need to clean up millions of gallons of toxic, radioactive waste."

That waste threatens the Columbia River, which forms the border of Oregon and Washington, Wyden said.

The new energy secretary must also end a "longstanding culture of retaliation against whistleblowers who raise safety and management alarms," Wyden said.

U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., who represents the Hanford area in the House, congratulated Perry on his confirmation.

Newhouse noted that the Energy Department is responsible for Hanford and the adjacent Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

"With Secretary Perry at the department's helm, I look forward to working together to ensure that Hanford and PNNL have the support to accomplish their respective missions," Newhouse said.

Official: Space heater caused fire that killed four children

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — A house fire in rural Oregon that killed four children and critically burned three other family members started with a portable space heater that was being used after a fireplace malfunctioned, a volunteer fire chief said Thursday.

Combustible materials placed too close to the heater ignited and started the blaze in the tiny timber town of Riddle, Fire Protection District Chief Rich Holloway said in a post on the district's Facebook page.

Holloway did not immediately return two calls but city manager Kathy Wilson confirmed the authenticity of the Facebook post in a phone interview.



Alyssa Bell, 9, of Riddle participates in a candlelight vigil for the victims of a house fire Wednesday night in Riddle.

The fire killed four children ranging from 4 to 13 and devastated the tiny town with a population of fewer than 1,000 people. Riddle

is about 200 miles south of Portland.

A component of the fireplace that forces heated air back into the home malfunctioned several days before the blaze early Wednesday and the family was using the heater until they could get it repaired, Holloway wrote.

"All the burn pattern indicators, witness statements and the statement from the father on first arrival, all corroborate," he said.

Some members of the all-volunteer fire department knew the family, Wilson said.

"In a small town like this, everyone knows each other and this has been devastating," she said. "It is just such a tragedy. It's something we've never seen before. It has affected everyone."

Community members held a candlelight vigil at a church late Wednesday that attracted more than 300 people.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast
TODAY SATURDAY SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY
Mostly cloudy Mainly cloudy with a bit of rain

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yesterday
TEMPERATURE HIGH 51° LOW 33°
PRECIPITATION 24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"

REGIONAL FORECAST
Coastal Oregon: Periods of rain today; arriving during the afternoon in the south.
Eastern Washington: Periods of rain mixing with wet snow today.

REGIONAL CITIES Today Sat. Astoria 48 35 r 45 33 r Baker City 43 33 c 45 28 sh

WINDS (in mph) Today Saturday Boardman SSW 4-8 WNW 3-6 Pendleton S 6-12 WNW 4-8

UV INDEX TODAY 0 2 3 2 0 0
8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.
0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY
Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.
National Summary: Cold air with spotty snow is in store from the Great Lakes to the Northeast today.

NATIONAL CITIES Today Sat. Albuquerque 61 37 pc 68 40 s Louisville 44 30 s 59 40 s Memphis 58 38 s 67 47 s