

# New Mexico's largest city affirms 'immigrant-friendly' status

Albuquerque's pushback follows viral ICE arrest in Walmart

BY: [DANIELLE PROKOP](#) - JULY 22, 2025 4:55 PM



Mayor Tim Keller, center, at the signing of an executive order on Monday, July 21, 2025. (Courtesy of El Centro de Igualdad y Derechos)

The mayor of New Mexico's largest city signed an [executive order](#) this week reaffirming Albuquerque's position as an "immigrant-friendly city," as some members of the city council said they would push further protections in city ordinances later this year.

In a statement during the executive order signing ceremony Monday, Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller said [federal legislation](#) and enforcement practices threaten due process and spread fear. A group of U.S. House Democrats on Tuesday [similarly blasted President Donald Trump's administration](#) for what they called “cruelty” and “lawlessness” in carrying out mass deportations of migrants without legal status.

Keller's order followed [weekend protests](#) outside of an Albuquerque Walmart where Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents recently tased and arrested Deivi Jose Molina-Pena, a 33-year-old who — according to friends and family interviews with Source NM — lived in the United States legally under Temporary Protected Status after leaving Venezuela two years ago.

“In the face of federal actions and proposals that undermine human rights and respect, sow fear and destabilization among our families, and damage our economy and threaten our public safety, the City of Albuquerque reaffirms its moral, legal and policy duty to uphold civil rights, public safety and serve all residents with dignity,” Keller [said during the event](#).

Albuquerque's new order expands the city's [2018 Immigrant-Friendly Resolution](#), which states that no city entity assists in federal civil immigration enforcement, including raids, detentions or information-sharing unless legally required by a court. [The U.S. Department of Homeland Security at the end of May](#) included Bernalillo and 22 other New Mexico counties on a list of so-called “sanctuary” jurisdictions, an [April executive order directive by President Trump](#).

Keller's executive order states that ICE “must clearly identify its officers and avoid harmful or disruptive detainment tactics in public spaces.” Federal legislation [recently introduced by Michigan U.S. Sen. Elissa Slotkin](#) would prohibit ICE from wearing face masks and require them to identify themselves. New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez [recently signed onto a letter](#) signed by more than 20 AGs nationwide urging them to pass the bill.

Keller's order also: requires city staff to report any U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement activity at public facilities; directs the city attorney to file public records requests to federal immigration officials and share findings

with the public; and allows the Albuquerque Police Department to confirm ICE activity when requested by the public.

“If we get [an] inquiry from the media or the public, APD dispatchers can call a designated person at ICE and they could confirm to us whether they are doing some sort of immigration operation,” police spokesperson Gilbert Gallegos told Source of the new provision.

But APD has some limitations, he said.

“We don’t know ahead of time if they’re doing some sort of operation, or what their operations are,” Gallegos said.

Similarly, New Mexico State Police told Source NM it did not have any additional information on the ICE arrest of Molina-Pena.

Four members of the Albuquerque City Council also [issued statements](#) saying they plan to introduce further ordinances that will “strengthen protections” for immigrant communities after the council’s return from July hiatus. Three other city councilors issued a statement denouncing the new executive order and describing it as [“nothing more than dangerous political theater.”](#)

Keller, who is running for reelection for his third term, also faced criticism from other mayoral candidates following the announcement, as well as the state Republican party.

In a [statement on social media](#), Amy Barela, the chairwomen of the Republican Party of New Mexico, condemned the executive order, saying that Keller “has chosen to prioritize illegal immigrants over the federal law enforcement officers that protect and serve our communities.”

Immigrant advocates, however, say Keller’s executive order is a step in the right direction.

“As New Mexicans struggle to pay rent and put food on the table, the federal government is slashing Medicaid, stripping millions of their health care, and pouring billions into a terrifying vision of mass deportation,” Fabiola Landeros, a community organizer with immigrant rights nonprofit El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos, said in a statement. “Family separation

and ICE's tactics are not only inhumane and un-Burqueño — they're bad economic policy. Targeting the workers, small business owners, and consumers who power our economy will drive up prices for everyone. Mayor Keller's executive order shows that holding the line is not enough; El CENTRO will continue organizing tirelessly at all levels of government to expand protections for our communities."

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