

ICE in West Virginia:

Analyzing Trump's Campaign Against Immigrants in the Mountain State and Fact-Checking “Operation Country Roads”



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ACLU
WV

The Trump Immigration Crackdown in West Virginia

Analyzing Trump's Campaign Against Immigrants in the Mountain State and Fact-Checking Operation Country Roads

An analysis of ICE detention records, 2022–2026 • Kyle Vass, Dragline • June 1, 2026

On January 30, 2026, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia stood at a podium and announced the results of “Operation Country Roads,” a fifteen-day immigration enforcement action that had concluded eleven days earlier. The release claimed **650 arrests** throughout the state, praised West Virginia law enforcement for leading the nation in 287(g) arrests on four of the fifteen days, and told the public that among those arrested were people with “serious criminal histories, including convictions for child sex abuse, drug possession and endangering the welfare of children.”

Department of Homeland Security records obtained via the Freedom of Information Act show *Operation Country Roads* was almost nothing like the press release described it. **Three-quarters** of the people detained during the operation had **no criminal record**. Of the small share who did, the most common conviction was driving under the influence. The dataset shows **zero convictions involving children, zero convictions for endangering the welfare of a child, and two misdemeanor drug-possession convictions**, despite the press release placing child sex abuse, child endangerment, and drug crimes at the center of its narrative.

Government officials also overstated the operation’s reach. The press release claimed 650 arrests “throughout West Virginia.” ICE’s own arrest records show 593 unique people were arrested in the state during the operation (a 9.6 percent inflation). The remaining 63 arrests the U.S. Attorney’s Office counted toward its West Virginia total were made in Pittsburgh, York, and Philadelphia, where the landmarks recorded by ICE agents explicitly identify them as Pennsylvania arrests despite their being filed under as West Virginia arrests in DHS data.

Of the 593 people arrested in West Virginia during the operation, ICE booked 408 into West Virginia detention facilities. Another 18 were counted by the government but appear to have been arrested outside the operation’s 15-day window or apprehended in Pennsylvania and transferred into WV detention. The remaining 185 were processed without ever being held in a West Virginia jail. Some were deported within days through field offices in Pennsylvania, some were released on a non-detained docket, and some had charging documents canceled by ICE

itself. The detention records that anchor most of this report describe the 408 who were held in West Virginia facilities. (What happened to the 185 not detained is examined in Section 1.)

In addition to the inaccuracies about Operation Country Roads, ICE's own data reveals a shift in priorities and policies regarding immigration enforcement under the Trump administration. Before the inauguration, the average immigration detention involved someone with a criminal conviction (90 percent of those detained) being detained in West Virginia and sent out of state for processing.

By the inauguration, **the percentage of people being detained who had criminal convictions fell from 90 to 17 percent** and ICE began sending people from out of state into West Virginia's regional jail system. Since Trump took office, **33 percent (940 of 2,847) of all people detained by ICE held in West Virginia correctional facilities were sent in from Pennsylvania**. In the two years before Trump took office, only four percent of people held in West Virginia jails as ICE detentions were sent in from out of state

Including people sent into WV jails from out of state, this dataset shows people detained by ICE spent a combined number of **17,657 days** in our state's correctional facilities from Trump's first day in office to March 10, 2026. At \$90 a day to house people detained by ICE, this immigration enforcement has earned the state's jail system an estimated **\$1,589,172** so far for its role in housing immigrants targeted by Trump.

Overview

The report is an analysis of the **10,729 ICE detention records** and **2,772 arrest records** generated between September 30, 2022 through March 10, 2026 for all ICE detentions where a person was detained in or sent to a West Virginia detention facility.

The report analyses three and a half years of immigration detention data, checks the U.S. Attorney's specific claims about Operation Country Roads against what the detention records show, debunks the Trump administration framing of ICE enforcement targeting "the worst of the worst" and describes the larger machine at play that saw West Virginia's jails transformed into holding facilities for immigrants who overwhelmingly had no criminal convictions. This report is organized around six key findings.

Key findings

1

Three-quarters of the people arrested during Operation Country Roads had no criminal record. The most common conviction among the small share who did was driving under the influence.

Of 593 people ICE arrested in WV during the operation, 451 (76 percent) had no criminal record and no pending charges. 85 (14 percent) had pending criminal charges. Only 57 (10 percent) had any prior criminal conviction. Of the 408 also booked into a WV detention facility, the same pattern holds: 305 (75 percent) had no record, 61 (15 percent) had pending charges, and 42 (10 percent) had prior convictions. The most common conviction in detention records was driving under the influence (13 cases), followed by illegal entry itself (9 cases) and general traffic offenses (7 cases). The data shows zero convictions involving children, zero sex-related convictions of any kind, and two misdemeanor drug-possession convictions, despite the fact these were the only crime categories the press release named.

2

Both the U.S. Attorney's Office and DHS misrepresented Pennsylvania arrests as West Virginia arrests.

The press release claimed 650 arrests “throughout West Virginia.” ICE’s own records show 593 people arrested in the state (a 9.6 percent inflation) and only 408 of those arrests produced an ICE detention in West Virginia, 185 were processed entirely outside the WV detention system, and 63 arrests were made outside of West Virginia in places like Pittsburgh, York, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania but were coded by DHS as being West Virginia arrests (bringing the actual inflated number to 656 people arrested).

3

Since the inauguration, the profile of the average ICE detainee in a West Virginia jail has is far less likely to have a criminal history.

Before January 20, 2025, **90 percent** of people detained through WV facilities had prior criminal convictions. After, **17 percent** did. The share held solely on suspicion of a civil immigration violation (no record or charges) climbed from 4 percent to 64 percent. The countries they came from shifted too: Central America displaced Mexico as the leading region, and the number of citizenships represented nearly doubled.

4

The day after the inauguration, a pipeline from a single Pittsburgh ICE hold room opened and has since funneled 940 people into West Virginia jails.

933 of those 940 went directly from Pittsburgh to a single destination: Northern Regional Jail in Moundsville. Before January 20, 2025, that same Pittsburgh hold room had sent a total of two people into WV detention across two years. By the peak of Operation Country Roads, West Virginia jails were holding **144 ICE detainees per day on average** (three times the 48-bed cap the state had originally contracted to accept).

5

People the federal government had already decided to let go (including two people released under humanitarian protections) were re-detained in West Virginia and, in most cases, deported.

The detention records identify **52 people** whose pre-inauguration ICE detention ended in a formal legal release (parole, an immigration judge's bond, an order of recognizance, or an order of supervision) and who were then picked up again, transferred into a West Virginia facility, and processed a second time. Forty of those 52 were removed from the country.

6

At the peak of Operation Country Roads, 336 people were crammed into West Virginia's jails on ICE detainers (seven times the 48-bed cap the state had contracted to provide ICE).

On the morning of January 14, 2026 (day ten of the fifteen-day operation) state corrections records showed 336 ICE detainees held across West Virginia's regional jail system. At South Central Regional Jail, where 116 people were being held for ICE that morning, the jail was 129 percent over its rated capacity; without ICE, it would have been at 103 percent. At Western Regional Jail, 88 ICE detainees helped push the facility to 118 percent of capacity; without ICE, it would have been at 102 percent. The state's jails have been consistently overcrowded for years. (By July 2022, South Central Regional Jail was already operating at 131 percent of capacity, Northern at 140 percent, and the system had been [flagged by the ACLU of West Virginia](#) as the deadliest in the nation.)

1. Operation Country Roads

The press release announcing Operation Country Roads leaned on two basic claims 1) that the operation was large, and 2) that it targeted dangerous criminal actors. The dataset shows these claims to be inaccurate. ICE's own records capture every detention and arrest that occurred in West Virginia (including the facility, the book-in and book-out timestamps, the detainee's prior criminality classification, specific convictions where they exist, and the sequence of facilities a person passes through before release or removal). These records show that the press release's two claims are untrue.

Volume: 593 arrests in West Virginia (with 63 Pennsylvania arrests counted as West Virginia), not "650 arrests"

Despite the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia's press release announcing that Operation Country Roads had yielded 650 arrests, the data provided by DHS shows a different picture. Between January 5 and January 19, 2026, (the 15-day span covering the operation) DHS data show recorded 593 people were arrested within West Virginia. DHS labeled 63 arrests that occurred in Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, York, and Philadelphia) as "West Virginia." The USAO's figure of 650 arrests is likely derived from adding those mislabeled arrests with the arrests that occurred in West Virginia for: a combined total of 656 arrests.

Of the 593 arrests that occurred in West Virginia, 408 were booked into ICE detention at a West Virginia facility. (This figure excluded detentions that originated in Pennsylvania and were transferred into West Virginia facilities.) The detention records show booking volume for ICE detentions in WV peaking at 52 people per day on January 12 and January 13 -- roughly five times the 10-per-day baseline of the week before and the week after.

Of the 656 unique people ICE counted as having been arrested in West Virginia during the operation, 63 were arrested at landmarks ICE itself recorded in Pennsylvania: 30 at "Pittsburgh General Area" street arrests, 19 at "Pittsburgh Street Arrest," 7 at York field office operations, 4 at Philadelphia general-area arrests, and 3 at other Pennsylvania apprehension sites.

What happened to the 185 arrested but not detained in West Virginia

Once cross referenced for accuracy in West Virginia locations, ICE's arrest table shows 593 unique people arrested in West Virginia during Operation Country Roads. The detention table shows 408 of those people booked into a West Virginia ICE detention facility. The 185-person gap is explained by ICE's arrest records.

Of the 185 arrested-but-not-detained people, **roughly a third had already been deported by the time the FOIA snapshot was generated**, often processed entirely through ICE's Pittsburgh, York, or Philadelphia field offices rather than the Charleston, WV sub-office. Most of the rest had active immigration cases on file but no detention recorded. They were arrested by 287(g)-deputized state and local officers and processed without a stay in a West Virginia jail. Eight had their charging documents canceled by ICE itself, meaning the agency dropped the case after the arrest. The remaining handful were released onto a non-detained docket or placed on Alternatives to Detention.

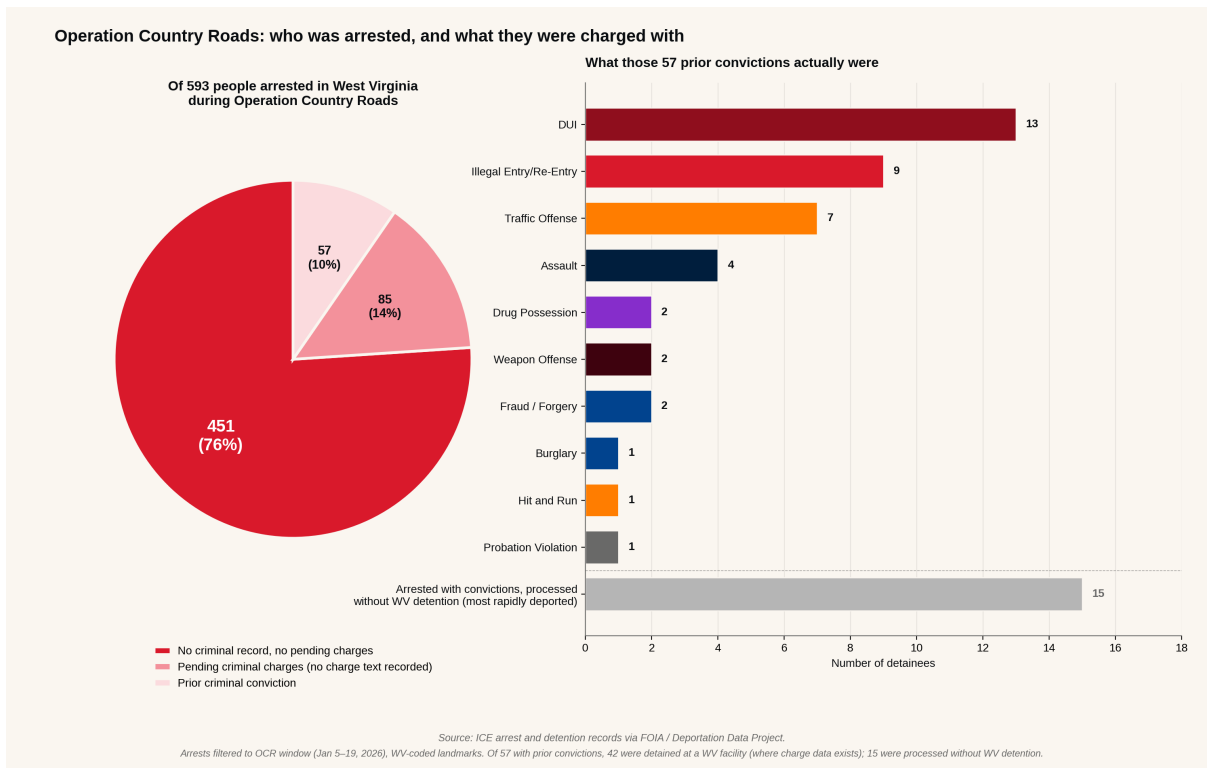
The pattern is consistent with a parallel deportation pipeline running alongside the West Virginia detention system. The 287(g) program empowers state and local officers to arrest on federal immigration charges; ICE then has discretion over whether to book the person into detention facilities or process them another way. During Operation Country Roads, more than a quarter of all arrests in West Virginia were processed without producing a detention record at all.

What the rest of this section describes — the criminality breakdown, the conviction details, the facility transfers, the overcrowding — captures only the experience of the 408 people ICE booked into West Virginia jails. It is a partial view of Operation Country Roads, by design: the 185 people processed outside the detention system show up in arrest records but not in the day-to-day operations of the jails this report focuses on.

Criminal status of the 408 detentions under Operation Country Roads

Three-quarters of the 408 people booked into West Virginia ICE detention during the operation had no criminal record and no pending charges. ICE's own internal classification labels them "Other Immigration Violators"; held solely on suspicion of a civil immigration violation.) That ratio also holds in the broader arrest data. Among all 593 people arrested in West Virginia during the operation, ICE classified 76 percent as having no criminal record, 14 percent as facing pending charges, and 10 percent as having prior convictions.)

A note on the data: ICE only records conviction details for people it actually detained. The breakdown below shows what those detentions look like. It does not match what the U.S. Attorney's press release said the operation was about.



The three categories shown are ICE’s own classifications at book-in. They reflect how the agency itself described the people it was holding during the operation.

The category “Pending criminal charges, no charge text recorded” offers no further information as to the nature of the allegations these people face in ICE records. All 61 people classified this way have blank fields where the charge text and crime-class information would normally be recorded. ICE described them as having pending charges, but the nature of those charges is not in the records. The only population in the operation with actual criminal charge data in the detention records is the 42 people with prior criminal convictions.

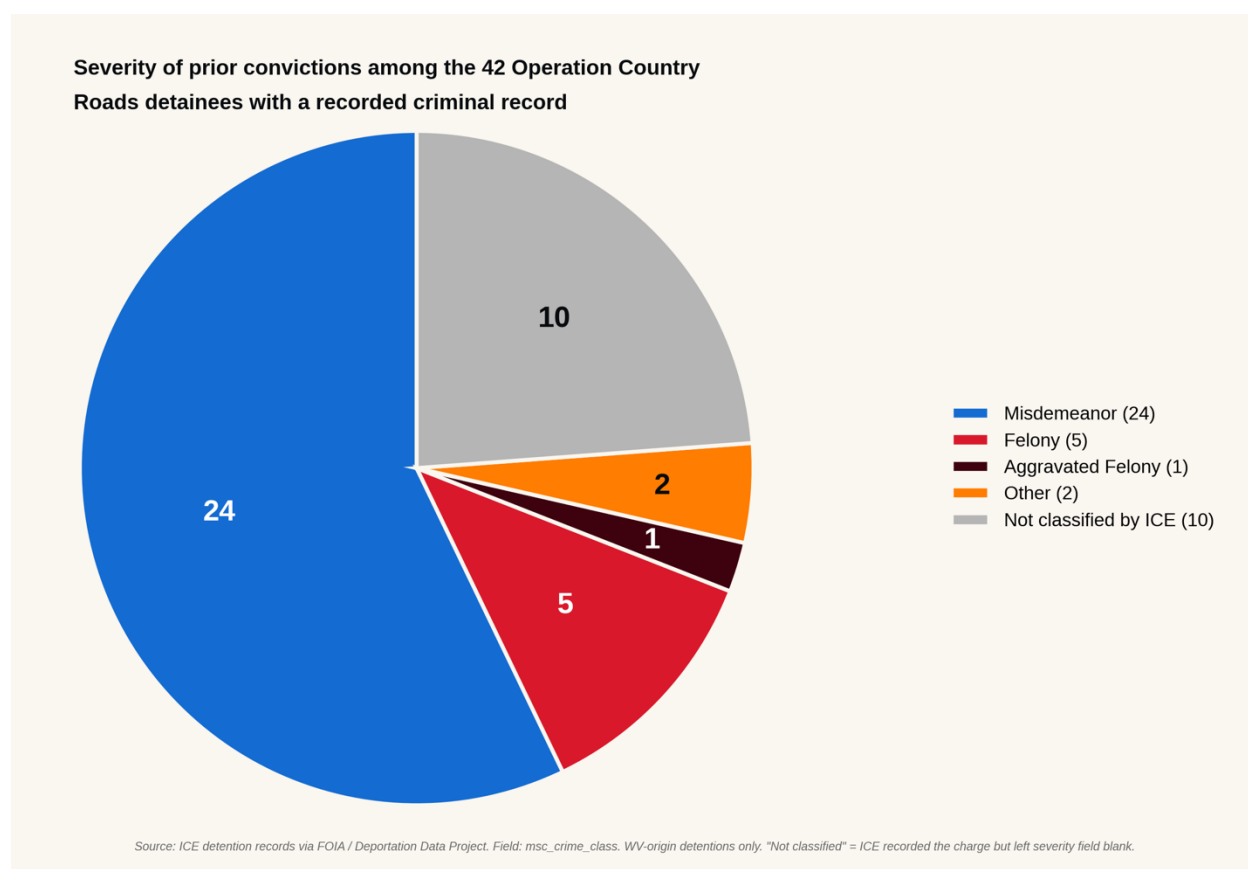
What those 42 convictions *actually* were

Of the 42 Operation Country Roads detainees with prior criminal convictions, the most common most serious criminal offense (a field noted by ICE data) by a wide margin was driving under the influence of liquor. DUI alone accounted for 13 of the 42 convictions (or one-third of everyone in the operation with any criminal record).

The next most common convictions were for illegal entry or re-entry themselves (the underlying civil immigration violation, not a separate public-safety concern). Weapons offenses and drug offenses account for four just convictions across the entire WV-origin population of detainees

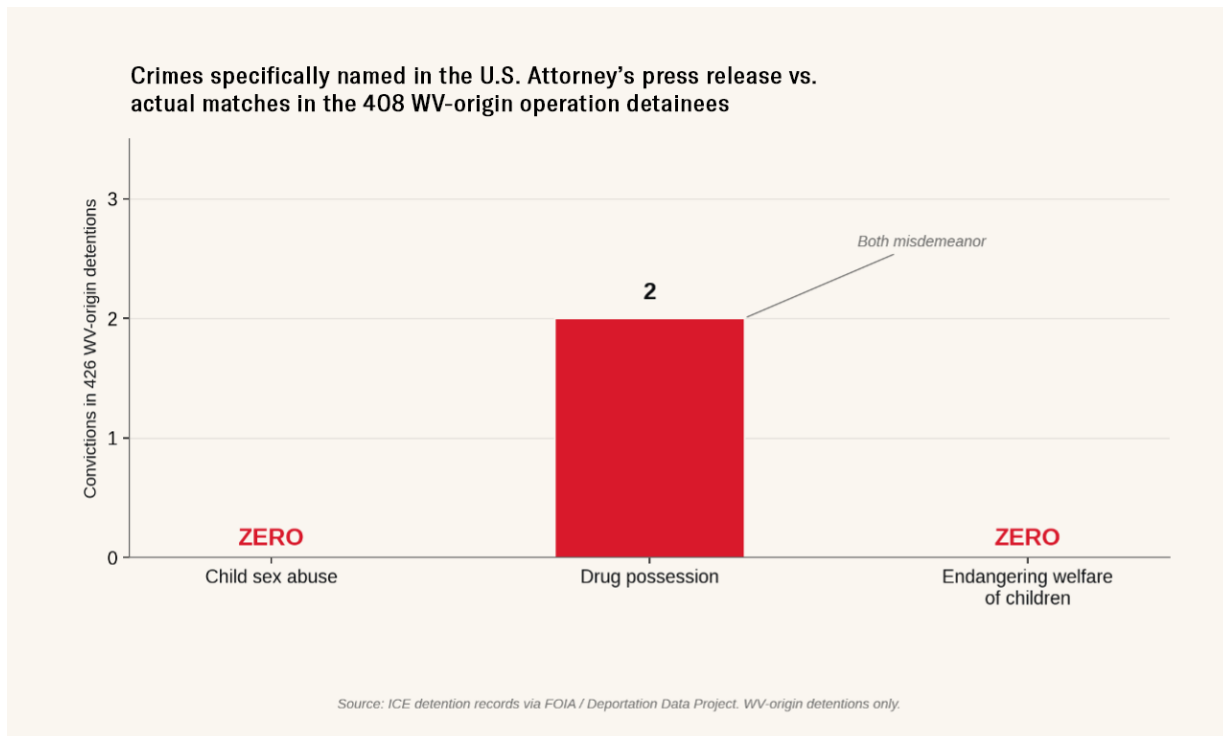
(two weapons offenses, and two drug-possession misdemeanors). The other categories that was frontloaded in the WVSAO press release, sex crimes and endangering children do not appear in the data whatsoever. (One person was arrested at a Pittsburgh landmark during the operation with a sex assault conviction, but because his arrest was PA-coded he is not part of the WV arrest analysis above.)

That holds even when severity is considered. Of the 42 convictions, twenty-four were misdemeanors, five were felonies, and one single case was classified as an aggravated felony. Two were marked simply as “Other.” The remaining ten records have no severity class entered at all by ICE — a data-quality gap in the agency’s own records, not a missing categorization on our part.



The specific claims

The press release highlighted three particular crime categories to illustrate the profile of those arrested: child sex abuse, drug possession, and endangering the welfare of children. Despite these allegations, only drug possession appears in the data as two misdemeanor charges.



***Fewer than ten** of the 408 people detained at West Virginia facilities during Operation Country Roads have anything plausibly describable as a serious criminal record. Even accepting ICE’s own classification, the operation was overwhelmingly directed at people the agency itself had categorized as having no criminal history.*

Where the 408 detained people were held

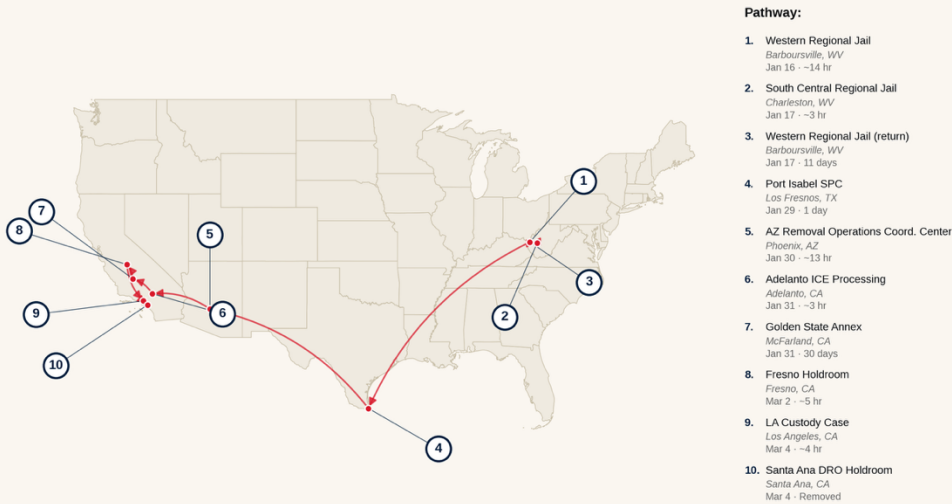
The operation’s volume overflowed West Virginia’s three jails long associated with holding ICE detentions: Eastern Regional Jail, Northern Regional Jail, and South Central Regional Jail. Three additional regional facilities (Western Regional Jail in Barboursville, Southern Regional Jail in Beaver, and Southwestern Regional Jail in Holden) came online as ICE detainees within 48 hours of one another in the first week of the operation.

The pathways of individual detainees through correctional facilities reveal inconsistencies in the way people were processed during this operation, both locally and nationally. One person, a Mexican national with no criminal record, was booked into Western Regional Jail at 1:58 p.m. on

January 16, 2026. He was moved to South Central Regional Jail the next afternoon, then back to Western three hours later, where he spent 11 days. From there he was flown to Port Isabel, Texas; then to an Arizona coordination center; then to Adelanto, California; then to Golden State Annex; then to a Fresno hold room; then to an LA custody case; then to Santa Ana. By the time he had traversed nine distinct facilities across four states, his release status read “Removed.” His entire detention lasted six weeks.

Six weeks across ten stops: the journey of one Mexican national

Booked into Western Regional Jail (Barboursville, WV) on January 16, 2026 with no criminal record. Cycled through nine unique facilities across four states. Final disposition: Removed.



Source: ICE detention records via FOIA / Deportation Data Project. Six-week journey from Barboursville, WV (Jan 16, 2026) to Santa Ana, CA (Mar 4, 2026), spanning four states.

The cross-country flight pathway of one Mexican national booked into Western Regional Jail (Barboursville) on January 16, 2026 with no criminal record. He cycled through 10 distinct facility bookings across four states (WV, TX, AZ, CA) over six weeks before being removed from the country.

Inside West Virginia’s jails

The 408 ICE detentions initiated at West Virginia facilities during Operation Country Roads landed on a jail system that was already at its limit. West Virginia's regional jail system has been a chronic overcrowding story for years, documented in repeated reporting and [a 2020 ACLU-WV analysis](#) that found the state's jails were the deadliest in the country.

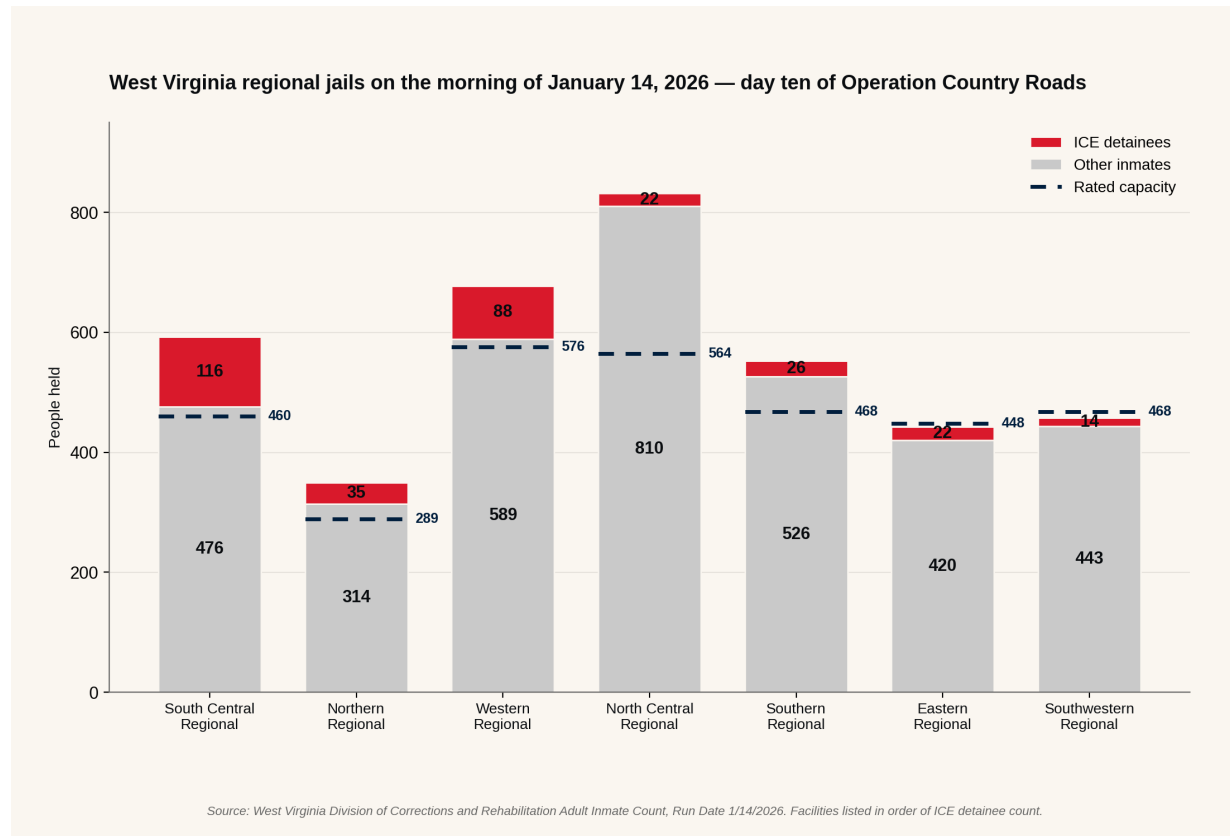
Daily census reports from the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (point-in-time counts of everyone physically held in each facility on a given morning) show what the operation did to the jails holding its detainees.

On the morning of January 14, 2026, the tenth day of the operation, 336 people were being held in West Virginia jails on ICE detainees. The state’s contract with ICE was reported to only offer

48 beds. But at \$90 a person per day, the rapid expansion of people being held in West Virginia was likely lucrative for a jail system that has long been plagued by funding issues.

On the morning of January 14, the operation had filled seven times that count. By January 16, the census counted 312 ICE detainees across the system. Together, those two snapshots are the closest thing to a live picture of what Operation Country Roads did to the state’s jails.

The concentration was heaviest at the larger jails:



ICE crammed people into a system that had long been established as overcrowded and under resourced. At Northern, South Central, and Western Regional Jails, ICE detainees account for nearly the entire overage during this operation. Without the ICE population, West Virginia's jail system on that morning would have been at 106 percent of capacity. ICE took a chronic overcrowding problem and, at several jails, turned it into a financially rewarded one.

Much like the press release about Operation Country Roads, our state officials have misrepresented the number of ICE detentions our state facilities have taken on and the nature of their criminal convictions.

In October 2025, a state corrections spokesperson told West Virginia Watch that Western Regional Jail in Barboursville only held ICE detainees who had pending state or local charges,

and typically for no longer than 72 hours. Detention records show neither claim holds up. Of 36 ICE stints recorded at Western Regional Jail since the inauguration, only two detentions involved a person ICE classified as having pending criminal charges while six others involved people with prior criminal convictions. The remaining 28 (more than three-quarters) at that facility involved people ICE classified as having no criminal record and no pending charges at all. And more than half of the 36 stints lasted longer than 72 hours; the longest ran almost 25 days. On the morning of January 14, 2026, the jail was holding 88 people on ICE detainees.

Outcomes so far

By the March 10, 2026 data snapshot of ICE detentions (less than two months after the operation concluded) 275 of the 408 WV-origin detainees (67 percent) had already been deported. Another 93 were still in ICE custody with proceedings ongoing. Fourteen had been released under an order of recognizance, eleven bonded out by an immigration judge, nine accepted voluntary departure, one was granted relief by a judge, two were transferred elsewhere, and three were released under other court-ordered or humanitarian provisions.

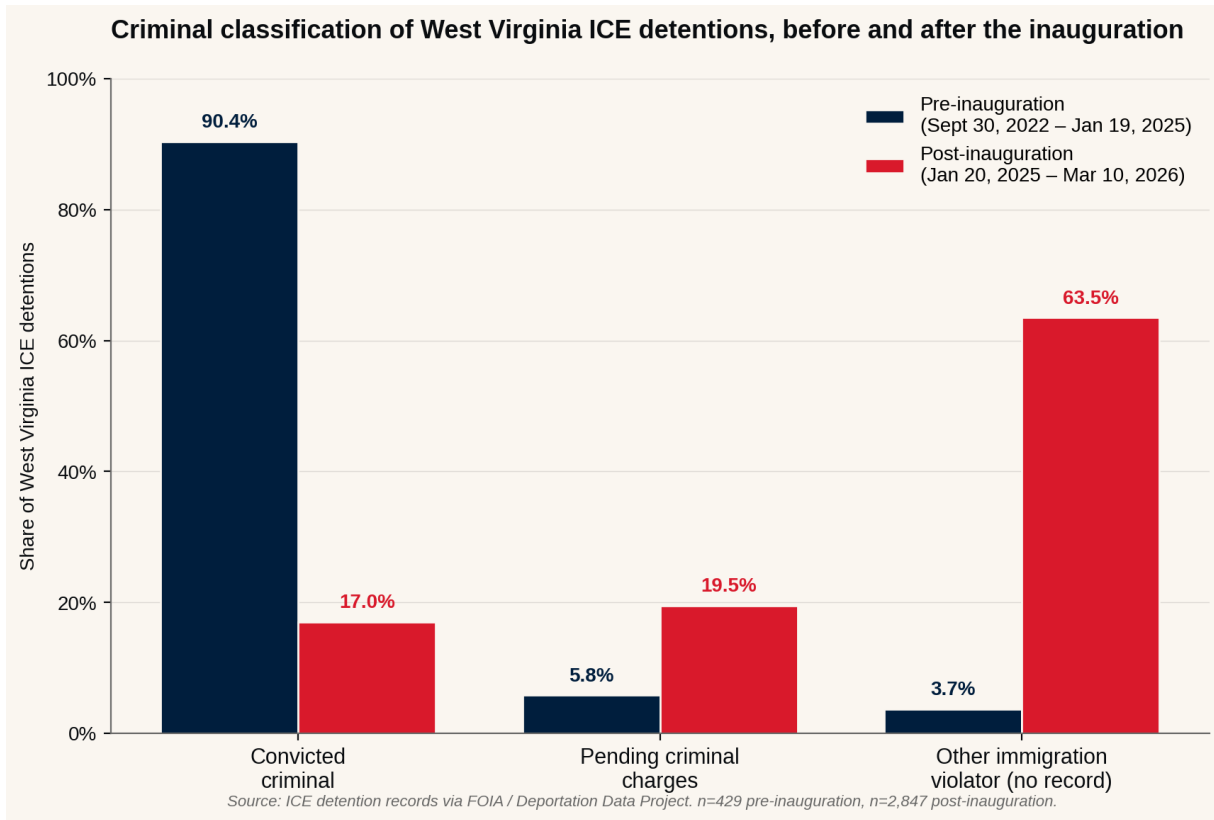
By mid-March, two-thirds of the people detained in West Virginia during Operation Country Roads had been removed from the country. Three-quarters of them had no criminal record in the first place.

2. How West Virginia's ICE detention changed

The pattern visible in Operation Country Roads (large volume, low criminality) is not new. It is the acceleration of a shift that began the day of the inauguration.

Under the Biden administration, West Virginia's ICE detention facilities were used almost exclusively for people with serious criminal histories. In the 28 months of pre-inauguration data analyzed here, 90.4 percent of stays in WV facilities were of people with prior criminal convictions. People held solely for a civil immigration violation (no criminal record, no pending charges) made up 3.7 percent – the old baseline.

In the 13 months that followed the inauguration, that baseline reversed. The share of detentions involving someone with a prior conviction dropped to **17 percent**. The share involving someone with no criminal history at all climbed to **63.5 percent**. The profile of the average person detained in a West Virginia jail because of ICE inverted, from someone with a criminal conviction to someone without.



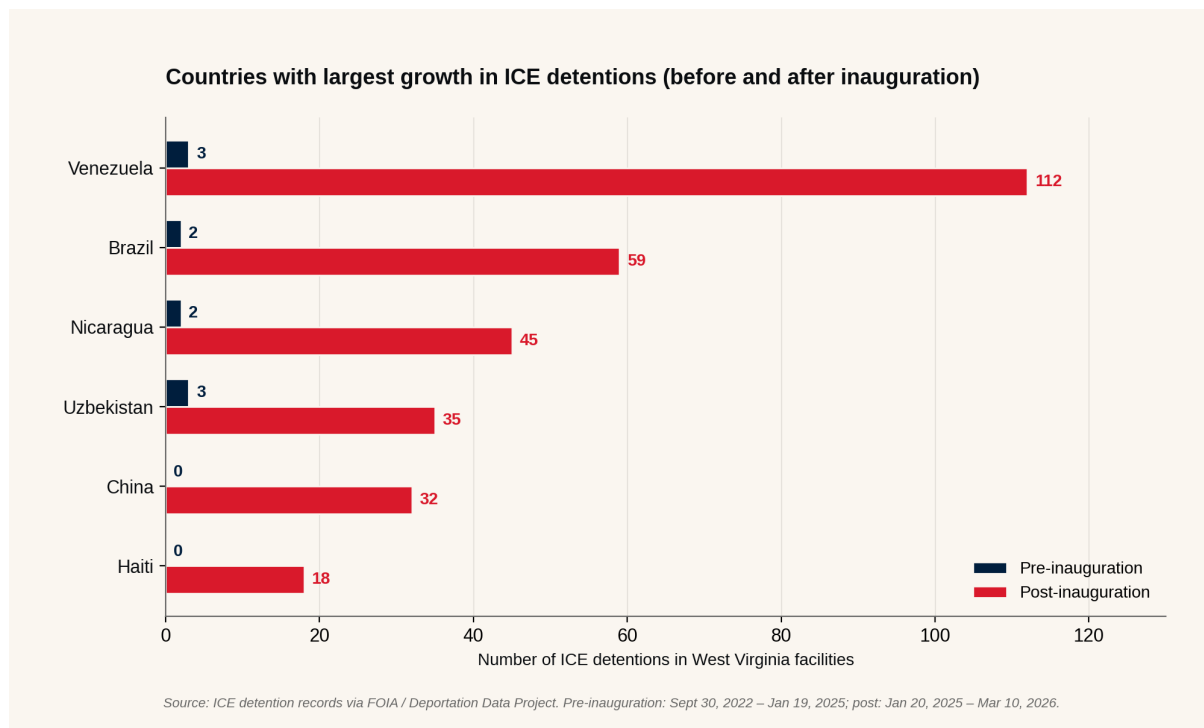
A different map of origin

In addition to changes in criminal background, people coming through West Virginia’s jails after the inauguration were, increasingly, from different places.

Before the inauguration, Mexican nationals were the single largest group by a wide margin, accounting for 47 percent of WV ICE detentions. Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua) was second, at 22 percent. The Caribbean, driven by Cuba, was third, at 13 percent. People from Africa, Asia, and Europe combined accounted for roughly 1 in 10 detainees. After the inauguration, the map looked different. **Central America displaced Mexico as the leading region of origin**, climbing to 46 percent of stays. The Caribbean (where virtually all pre-inauguration detentions had been Cuban) collapsed to 2 percent. South American, Asian, Middle Eastern, and African detainees scaled sharply, in some cases from near-zero. The pre-inauguration data contains citizens of 42 countries. The post-inauguration data contains citizens of 77 countries. Out of those 77 countries, 43 had no WV-detention history in the two years before the inauguration.

Region	Pre-inauguration	Post-inauguration	Change
Mexico	202 (47.1%)	888 (31.2%)	- 16%
Central America	96 (22.4%)	1,307 (45.9%)	+24%
South America	33 (7.7%)	321 (11.3%)	+4%
Caribbean	51 (11.9%)	63 (2.2%)	-10%
Asia / Central Asia	12 (2.8%)	130 (4.6%)	+2%
Africa	15 (3.5%)	27 (0.9%)	-3%
Europe	7 (1.6%)	40 (1.4%)	—
Middle East	3 (0.7%)	15 (0.5%)	—
Other	10 (2.3%)	56 (2.0%)	—

Some of the sharpest individual-country increases were in nationalities that had previously entered under humanitarian parole or temporary protected status programs the administration moved to unwind in its first months. Venezuela went from 3 pre-inauguration detentions to 112. Uzbekistan, 3 to 35. Brazil, 2 to 59. Nicaragua, 2 to 45. Haiti and China went from zero to 18 and 32 respectively.



3. The Pittsburgh pipeline

The inauguration did not just change the volume and composition of ICE detention in West Virginia. It changed the direction of the flow. Before, West Virginia was primarily a place people were taken from. After, it became a place people with no connection to the state were transferred into to wait.

Before: Locally detained and sent away

Of the 429 pre-inauguration stays in West Virginia, 411 (95.8 percent) began at a West Virginia facility. Only 18 originated elsewhere. The Pittsburgh ICE Hold Room (which would become a dominant out-of-state source after January 20, 2025) accounted for only two of those 18 transfers across the entire pre-inauguration window.

The pre-inauguration system was concentrated in three jails: South Central Regional Jail in Charleston, Eastern Regional Jail in Martinsburg, and Northern Regional Jail in Moundsville. South Central alone handled 88 percent (361 of the 411) pre-inauguration WV-origin stays.

After: A new corridor emerges

The first post-inauguration transfer from the Pittsburgh ICE Hold Room to a West Virginia facility was recorded **January 21, 2025** – just one day after the inauguration. Starting on that first day, **940** people would be transferred into West Virginia from the Pittsburgh hold room.

Their destination was overwhelmingly consistent: **933 of them went directly to a single jail** (Northern Regional Jail in Moundsville) as their second facility. The remaining seven split among other Pittsburgh bookings and a single transfer to North Central Regional Jail. Pittsburgh-to-Moundsville had become a route.

Across the broader post-inauguration window, 947 of 2,847 WV stays (33 percent) originated at a facility outside West Virginia. Nearly all of those (940 of 947) were from Pittsburgh.

Northern Regional Jail recorded 19 total ICE detentions in the 28 months before the inauguration. By mid-2025 it was logging more than a hundred new ICE bookings per month, almost entirely from the Pittsburgh feeder.

The footprint expanded to seven jails

Before the inauguration, three WV regional jails appeared in ICE detention records. After, four additional jails joined them. All four activated in the post-inauguration window, and three of those four activated within 48 hours of one another in the first week of Operation Country Roads.

West Virginia regional jail	First ICE booking	Status
South Central Regional Jail	--	Active before inauguration
Eastern Regional Jail	--	Active before inauguration
Northern Regional Jail	--	Active before inauguration
Potomac Highlands Regional Jail	Aug 28, 2025	First ICE detentions after inauguration

Southwestern Regional Jail	Jan 10, 2026	Activated during Operation Country Roads
Western Regional Jail	Jan 10, 2026	Activated during Operation Country Roads
Southern Regional Jail	Jan 11, 2026	Activated during Operation Country Roads
North Central Regional Jail	Jan 30, 2026	First ICE detentions after Operation Country Roads

Potomac Highlands Regional Jail opened to ICE detention in August 2025 and received detainees steadily through early 2026. Southern, Western, and Southwestern all activated between January 10 and January 11 (the first week of Operation Country Roads). Southwestern received 9 detainees across five days and then stopped.

Jail beds and the financial incentive

West Virginia’s Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation charges ICE **\$90 per day per detainee bed**. Under the contract, the state has made **48 beds** available to ICE at any given time. WVDCCR has publicly confirmed receiving **\$728,460 from ICE for calendar year 2025** — a real, audited number, reported by the agency itself. That’s the cleanest measure of what ICE has paid to hold immigrants in West Virginia jails.

But this dataset shows that from the inauguration to March 10, people detained by ICE have spent a combined **17,657 days** in our state’s correctional facilities, resulting in an estimated **\$1.59 million** with **nearly \$295,000** generated as a result of people detained under Operation Country Roads alone.

4. The people who had once been let go

Of the 3,248 people in the West Virginia detention dataset from before and after the inauguration, 153 people had at least one detention in ICE custody before January 20, 2025 and at least one stay on or after it. They were detained under the previous administration, released in some form, and detained again under the second.

For **56 of those 153 people**, the pre-inauguration detention did not end in deportation or a transfer to criminal custody. It ended in a formal legal release (ICE parole, an immigration judge's bond, an order of recognizance, or an order of supervision). These are people the federal government had affirmatively chosen to release from detention. **52 of those 56 people who were let go were then re-detained into a West Virginia facility.** (Forty of those 52 were ultimately deported.)

Parole is not granted casually. ICE affirmatively releases a person from custody under parole when it determines continued detention is not warranted (sometimes following a formal screening that the person faces a credible risk of persecution or torture if deported). Twenty-seven of the 52 re-detained people (more than half) had previously been paroled, one of them under an explicit humanitarian flag. A twenty-eighth had been released under a humanitarian order of supervision.

Of those 27 people paroled, nine were Venezuelan, six were Uzbek. Both nationalities had benefited from humanitarian parole programs the administration moved to unwind in its first months in office. The pattern in the data tracks the policy change: programs that ICE had used to release people were dismantled, and the people released under them were picked up again.

These were not people who evaded the system. They had been through it. They had been evaluated. Some had been released under humanitarian determinations. And after the inauguration, they were picked up again anyway and, in most cases, deported.

5. Outcomes

Most people detained by ICE in West Virginia since the inauguration have been deported. Of the 2,847 post-inauguration detentions, 2,087 (73 percent) ended in removal by the March 10, 2026, snapshot. Another 481 were still in custody with cases unresolved. Once those cases close, the removal share is likely to climb further; among the post-inauguration detentions that had already resolved by the snapshot, 88 percent ended in deportation.

That rate of deportations once detained isn't new. Under the Biden administration, 86 percent of resolved WV ICE detentions also ended in removal. The difference under Trump is the volume of people being detained (and, as a result, deported). West Virginia's ICE detention system was removing roughly the same percent of the people it caught. Under Trump, it has been detaining **thirteen times** more people per month.

One outcome moved in the other direction, and it moved sharply. Immigration judges granted bond to 103 post-inauguration detainees, **nearly twice** the pre-inauguration rate as a share of all stays (3.6 percent, up from 1.9 percent). Over the same period, the forms of release ICE itself controls (orders of supervision and recognizance, where the agency chooses to let someone out under conditions) collapsed from 6.1 percent of stays to 1.8 percent. As ICE let fewer people out, judges let more out. The pattern fits a broader one visible across the country in 2025 and 2026: as the Trump administration accelerated immigration enforcement, the federal judiciary became one of the few institutional checks on it. The habeas rulings in West Virginia's own Southern District, described later in this section, are a sharper version of the same pattern.

Outcome	Pre-inauguration	Pre %	Post-inauguration	Post %
Removed (deported)	368	85.8%	2,087	73.3%
Still in custody at snapshot	3	0.7%	481	16.9%
Bonded out by immigration judge	8	1.9%	101	3.5%
Voluntary departure	2	0.5%	55	1.9%

Order of supervision / recognizance	25	5.8%	53	1.9%
Transferred to U.S. Marshals / other	15	3.5%	39	1.4%
Relief granted by immigration judge	1	0.2%	13	0.5%
Transferred	1	0.2%	13	0.5%
Proceedings terminated	4	0.9%	2	0.1%
Paroled / other	2	0.5%	3	0.1%

The backlog

Beyond the people who have already moved through the system, there is the backlog of people who at the end of this data snapshot were still waiting on their outcomes. **481 post-inauguration stays (nearly one in five) were still in ICE custody at the March 10, 2026, data snapshot, with no recorded outcome.** At the top of that queue is a Nigerian national, classified as a convicted criminal, who was booked into South Central Regional Jail on December 29, 2023. By the snapshot date he had been in ICE custody for **802 days** — more than two years — cycled through 14 separate facility bookings spanning West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and the federal penitentiary at Lewisburg. His case is the most extreme but not unique. At this snapshot, 156 post-inauguration detainees had been in custody for 180 days or more without a recorded outcome and five other people were above 370 days in custody.

The courts intervened

The FOIA dataset ends March 10, 2026. What it does not capture is the federal court response that, by the time the data snapshot was generated, had already begun to push back against the system the rest of this report describes.

Starting in late January 2026 (days after Operation Country Roads concluded) attorneys began filing habeas corpus petitions on behalf of ICE detainees held in West Virginia jails, arguing that their clients were being held without individualized custody hearings, in violation of the Fifth Amendment. On January 28, 2026, U.S. District Judge Joseph R. Goodwin granted the first of

these petitions, ordering the immediate release of a Venezuelan national held at South Central Regional Jail after a traffic stop on the West Virginia Turnpike. *“In our society, freedom is the constitutional default,”* Goodwin wrote. *“When the government confines a person in a jail and, when called upon, cannot articulate the facts or authority justifying that confinement, the detention violates the Fifth Amendment.”*

Over the next six weeks, four federal judges in the Southern District of West Virginia (Goodwin, Thomas Johnston, Robert C. Chambers, and Irene Berger) heard dozens of habeas petitions. **Every hearing resulted in the release of the petitioner.** By early March 2026, 71 habeas petitions had been filed in the district on behalf of ICE detainees held in West Virginia jails. **Judges ordered release in 65 of them.** The other cases resolved through transfer out of state or through protected status determinations that pre-empted the ruling.

The judges’ rulings were direct in their opposition to Trump’s attack on immigrants. Johnston, writing in one order, found that the government’s legal position *“insists that this Court should redefine or completely disregard the current law as it is clearly written.”* Goodwin issued a separate ruling finding that ICE’s use of masked officers and unmarked vehicles during West Virginia traffic stops violated the Fourth Amendment. In a third case, Judge Berger found that ICE had submitted a drug-possession conviction document as evidence against a detainee, but the conviction dated from 2009, when the detainee was four years old, and the document’s birthdate, birthplace, and parents’ names did not match the person in custody.

West Virginia jails back out

On March 26, 2026 (sixteen days after the data snapshot in this report) the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation announced that the state’s regional jail system had **temporarily suspended accepting new ICE civil detainees.** *“Due to a recent court order, the regional jail system has temporarily suspended accepting detainees,”* WVDCR spokesperson Andy Malinoski told reporters. *“We will continue communicating with our federal partners as these matters are addressed by the courts.”* The state’s jails, Malinoski said, would continue to accept people facing pending state criminal charges.

ICE’s documented response was to route new detainees around the West Virginia courts entirely. After the WVDCR suspension, attorneys filing the next round of habeas petitions reported that their clients had been transported directly from West Virginia traffic stops to Moshannon Valley Processing Center in Pennsylvania, bypassing the Southern District of West Virginia’s jurisdiction, and the federal judges who had been ordering detainees released.

The pipeline that was captured in this report (from the Pittsburgh ICE Hold Room into West Virginia’s regional jails, accelerating through Operation Country Roads and

peaking at 336 ICE detainees in state custody on a single January morning) ended, at least in the form documented here, six weeks after the data snapshot closed. Not because ICE slowed down. Because four federal judges told ICE, in case after case, that the way it had been running the pipeline was unconstitutional, and the state of West Virginia chose not to keep participating.

6. What the data does and doesn't show

The records analyzed here are ICE's own detention records, obtained through FOIA by the Deportation Data Project. They describe every ICE detention that touched a West Virginia facility between September 30, 2022 and February 26, 2026, along with release dates through March 10, 2026. The dataset is **comprehensive for what it covers**: 3,248 people and their immigration-based detentions through our jail system. What it cannot cover is what the government fails to include in its own record keeping or chooses not to share with the public. This includes:

- **Missing charge text for people with pending charges.** The 61 Operation Country Roads WV-origin detainees ICE classified as having "pending criminal charges" have uniformly blank fields where charge text and crime-class data would normally be recorded. ICE labeled them as facing criminal charges without documenting what those charges were. The detention records as released do not let us say anything more specific about this group's criminal exposure than what ICE itself entered which in the case of these people is nothing.
- **The criminality categories are ICE's.** The "Convicted Criminal," "Pending Criminal Charges," and "Other Immigration Violator" classifications are assigned by ICE at book-in. A different authority might categorize differently. But these are the classifications ICE itself uses to justify its enforcement priorities and are, therefore, the only yardstick against which to measure the agency's claims.
- **No credible-fear field.** The structured data does not contain an explicit credible-fear flag. The humanitarian-labeled release categories used in the re-detention analysis here are the closest available proxy. Individual case histories may include credible-fear determinations that are not visible in the structured columns.
- **Per-diem revenue total amounts.** The \$90/day rate is confirmed by West Virginia DCR, which has publicly reported \$728,460 in ICE payments received for calendar year 2025. The FOIA bed-day counts used here imply a higher theoretical billable total. Bed-day sums are a ceiling, not an audited total confirmed with any government agency.

- **The backlog is a moving target.** 484 post-inauguration stays were still ongoing at the March 10, 2026 cutoff. Their outcomes are unknown. Some number of additional deportations (possibly a large number) will accrue to the post-inauguration total as those cases resolve.

Closing

Before January 20, 2025, West Virginia's ICE detention system was small, local, and concentrated on people with criminal convictions. In the thirteen months that followed, it changed drastically. Our jails became part of a corridor, receiving hundreds of transfers from Pennsylvania. The footprint of ICE detention expanded from three regional jails to seven; a holding system for people with no criminal record. ICE detentions went from being used to catch people with criminal convictions and, instead, became a revenue generator for a jail system that is constantly finding itself owed money by our counties and municipalities.

Operation Country Roads was the peak event of that machine, not its beginning. During its fifteen days, ICE arrested 593 people in West Virginia and booked 408 of them into West Virginia detention. The U.S. Attorney's press release said there were 650 arrests "throughout West Virginia." Sixty-three of those 650 were arrests at Pittsburgh, York, and Philadelphia landmarks; ICE coded them as West Virginia anyway. Three-quarters of those arrested had no criminal record. Of the 593 arrested in West Virginia, fewer than ten had anything plausibly describable as a serious criminal history. Zero had a conviction for a crime against a child. Zero had a conviction for child endangerment. Two had misdemeanor drug-possession convictions.

The records describe when the federal government's policy shift happened, capture anyone ICE could get grab. They detail when and how a corridor opened to flood West Virginia jails with people detained in and outside of West Virginia. They show how quickly it scaled and who it pulled in, and where they sent them. What the records cannot describe is the cost to the people forced throughout these facilities, and what dangers await them when they are deported to their country of origin.

Data source: Individual-level ICE detention records obtained via FOIA litigation by the Deportation Data Project (deportationdata.org), covering bookings with first book-in dates from September 30, 2022 through February 26, 2026 and release dates through March 10, 2026. Operation Country Roads claims drawn from U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia press release, January 30, 2026. West Virginia DCR revenue figure per WV Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation spokesperson, reported in West Virginia Watch and other outlets. Analysis by Kyle Vass, Dragline, 2026.