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Minneapolis: A “perfect storm”

Steve Bakke  February 15, 2026



Minneapolis is suffering a “perfect storm,” with events and decisions in constant collision. Here’s a brief review of the immigration issue over the last several decades:

- Bush “The Younger” acquired bi-partisan border wall approval but showed little enthusiasm for building it.
- Obama was immigration-friendly but took a strong stand against illegal immigration. Tom Homan’s ICE set standing records for deportation. Homan received Obama’s Presidential Medal for his efforts.
- First-time candidate Trump prioritized immigration control and border wall construction. Democrats reversed course and objected to his policy.
- “Open border” best describes Biden’s term. More than 12,000,000 illegal immigrants are known to have been released with little or no vetting.
- Trump’s second term brought an ambitious promise to conduct mass deportations. As a practical matter, this promise may bring Trump more trouble than ultimate praise.

Complicating immigration control, some anti-ICE activists don’t want to simply object to the deportation methodology being used. These agitators want to nullify deportation entirely by declaring immigration laws unconstitutional.

“Nullification” is a legal theory that claims individual states can invalidate federal law by declaring it unconstitutional. This manifested itself as the “sanctuary cities” movement in the 1980s. Courts, including the Supreme Court, have repeatedly rejected the legitimacy of nullification.

It’s easy to claim that the outrage and encouragement vocalized by Governor Walz and Mayor Frey has given permission to demonstrators to act aggressively in opposition – sometimes resorting to obstruction, property destruction and violence.

These political leaders labeled Trump, ICE, and their supporters as Nazis, Gestapo, and even murderers. Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan also encouraged aggressive actions by telling residents to “put their bodies on the line.”

On the federal side of the issue, Trump’s description of political leadership as “retarded,” and his huge deportation ambitions became part of the Minneapolis problem. Additionally, federal officials labeling activists as “domestic terrorists” was needlessly inflammatory.

In hindsight, before agents rushed in, the President should have worked to improve the potential for local security assistance and compliance with detainer requests. While he’s not legally required to, in the future, he should consider “taking the high road.”

Many polls suggest that over 60% of voters generally support deportation efforts, even while disagreeing with some methodology and decisions. The enthusiasm of activist opposition

and mainstream press seem to contradict that statistic. I'm sure that impression was influenced by the extensive publicity given to the growing aggressiveness by anti-ICE activists.

Cygnal, a private polling company known for its accuracy, points to "under 55" female voters as the driving force, 91% of whom oppose deportations. That group is significantly influencing the media's reporting with their enthusiasm, and perhaps some coercion.

Obama deported over twice as many illegal immigrants as Trump has. Various other comparisons can be made. Contrary to claims, Obama did send ICE agents into the streets. Political pundit Larry elder points us to "Lost in Detention," a 2011 episode of "Frontline" on PBS for confirmation.

While sanctuary cities existed during Obama's administration, they didn't put up the kind of opposition that Trump is experiencing. There were instances of masks, helmets, and firearms under Obama, but the media didn't dwell on them.

John Lott of the Crime Research Center compared "lawless deportation" statistics, i.e. mistakes, for both presidencies. Lott reports Trump's wrongful arrest rate last year was one for every 14,925 arrests. Most were released within hours. Obama's rate his last two years was one for every 4,444 arrests - far worse.

Contrary to some reports and speculation, Snopes.com reported that approximately 74% of Obama's "removals" did not have an immigration judge hearing. This is similar to the current process which is receiving so much criticism.

Summarizing, Minneapolis isn't experiencing "Nazi tyranny." I shouldn't have to explain the difference - so I won't. These events are best described as a "perfect storm" of events and personalities, and the effect of recent welfare fraud charges in Minnesota can't be ignored when analyzing these events. Several years of open borders set the stage. And Trump's dramatic vow to conduct mass deportations led to predictable push-back.

Masks, weapons, and helmets aren't part of a ruthless strategy of intimidation. Rather, they are reactions to dangerous conditions and outright threats. They are justified. Unfortunately, when used, these items can become a welcome excuse for outrage and chaos.

Both sides can end up experiencing fear and confusion. No person involved in these confrontations is immune from making poor choices and mistakes, and lives can be lost. The violence must be stifled quickly or will escalate significantly.

Enforcement of immigration law isn't lawlessness. State and local governments aren't required to enforce federal immigration laws, but obstruction of federal agents doing so is lawlessness.

The value of first obtaining state and local cooperation has been demonstrated in several other states. If successful, agents can concentrate on the most dangerous targets, as they should. Mistakes, violence, and even deaths are largely eliminated when local security and riot control is implemented, along with cooperation on detainer requests.

These events point out the importance of tight border control. Experience proves that once inside the U.S., most undocumented arrivals are here to stay.

"Managing use of force is one of the most difficult challenges faced by law enforcement agencies...." That was an objection from the International Association of Chiefs of Police regarding President Trump's comment made several years ago: "...don't be too nice" to suspects in custody.

That's a useful reminder to leadership on both sides of the immigration control and deportation policy debates.