

OAKLAND, BERKELEY, AND EAST BAY NEWS, EVENTS, RESTAURANTS, MUSIC, & ARTS
NEWS & OPINION » OPINION JUNE 28, 2017

Making Oakland a Real Sanctuary City

The City Council is on the verge of implementing significant reforms aimed at protecting the civil liberties of all Oaklanders.

By *Brian Hofer*

SEARCH:

Email

Tweet

Share 25

Print

submit

On July 11, the City of Oakland's Public Safety Committee will consider two landmark policies to defend community members against the Trump Administration's war on sanctuary cities and immigrants.

click to enlarge



Brian Hofer.

Councilmember Rebecca Kaplan is sponsoring a resolution that, if adopted, would rescind the Oakland Police Department's authorization to participate in task forces with the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

And Councilmember Lynette Gibson-McElhaney is sponsoring an ordinance that would require OPD officers to adhere at all times to state and local standards when participating in any federal task forces, including the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force ("JTTF"), of which ICE is the largest member. In other words, the feds can't make our cops do anything that's a violation of our values and rules.

Both proposals were reviewed by the city's Privacy Advisory Commission and unanimously recommended for approval by the council.

Since his election, President Trump has moved quickly to do what candidate Trump said he would: increase deportations and surveil Muslim populations, all under the guise of "public safety." By rolling back Obama-era protections for victims of human trafficking and political oppression, and expanding the controversial 287(g) program which authorizes local law enforcement agents to enforce immigration law, Trump's inflammatory rhetoric has already caused a dramatic decrease in the reporting of crimes by members of the Latino community. Latinos are also abandoning public benefits programs they are entitled to, rather than risk their personal data being used by the federal government to target their families.

Since 9/11, federal agents working through the Joint Terrorism Task Force have conducted suspicionless interviews of Muslim Americans, including here in the Bay Area. Local cops have assisted them. Weak or non-existent federal guidelines allow for JTTF members to "assess" individuals without any suspicion of wrongdoing. JTTF assessments also trigger immigration status checks, potentially putting Oaklanders at risk even when not suspected of wrongdoing.

It has become clear that in the Trump era, protection of our civil liberties must occur at the local level. Comments made by Trump and his cabinet members, and his executive orders targeting sanctuary cities and immigrants, make it more critical than ever that the amount of surveillance and personal data

collected be the bare minimum, to ensure the safety of our community from unlawful and inhumane targeting.

Hate and fear of others are not Oakland values. It is with great encouragement and appreciation that we watch Bay Area mayors repeatedly stand tall in defense of our sanctuary city beliefs, even this past week, as the Republican-controlled house moved to strip funding from sanctuary cities.

Despite repeated court losses over his Muslim ban, Trump has not wavered in his desire to intimidate and oppress our Oakland brothers and sisters. His proposed budget reflects an increase of 15,000 ICE agents, and he continues to push for a wall on our southern border.

It is imperative that as policy makers for Oakland, the City Council do everything in its power to defend these vulnerable members of our community.

By adopting Councilmembers Kaplan and McElhaney's respective proposals, Oakland can make clear its position: Oakland is truly a place of refuge, and all are welcome here.

Brian Hofer is a member of Oakland Privacy, and Chair of the City of Oakland's Privacy Advisory Commission. He lives in Oakland. The comments in this piece are his alone.

Contact the author of this piece, send a letter to the editor, like us on Facebook, or follow us on Twitter.

« [New Oakland Police Sexual Misc...](#) [Who Will Be There When You Cal...](#) »