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Protestors in Peekskill Demand Cuts to ICE, Border Protection

SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 BY [ABBY LUBY](#)



Protestors at Friday's Defund Hate protest in Peekskill

More than 45 protestors gathered outside the office of U. S. Senator Charles Schumer (D- NY 9) at 1 Park Place in Peekskill Friday and demanded Congress cut funding for the U. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

In 2018, ICE held and detained more than 42,000 people in custody every day in substandard detention and deportation centers. The protest repeatedly condemned President Donald Trump for his growing, anti-immigration policies. Since Trump took office in 2017, funding for ICE has increased to more than \$1 billion.

Heralding the start of the protest was the drumming group PerSisters, about 10 women who loudly thumped on overturned plastic buckets. Baila Lemonik of the pro-democracy action group, Putnam Progressives said, "Immigrants are being subjected to inhumane treatment and they are being marginalized in our communities. ICE and the CBP are targeting people of color and we are raising our voices against the Trump administration to say, 'This has to stop.'"

Protestors in Peekskill urged Schumer, who was not present, to oppose increased spending in the upcoming appropriations bill and vote to roll back funding for to 2019 levels. A vote on the embattled bill has a September 30 deadline.

"We want to reduce the money that's going to ICE," said Gail Sasso, Organizer of CCoHOPE Indivisible, a regional organization made up of residents from Cortlandt, Croton-on-Hudson, Peekskill and Ossining, "Our grassroots effort will continue by calling our representatives on a regular basis and reaching out to residents and voters."

Sasso and Lemonik handed a three-page letter from CCoHOPE Indivisible to Schumer's staffer, Megan Glander. The letter urged the senator to "Fight back against requested funding increases for ICE." The letter requested that Schumer "act in solidarity with us, immigrant communities across the country, and asylum seekers coming here for a better life, by holding firm during these negotiations to reduce funding to ICE and CBP..."

Peekskill City Councilman Colin Smith, who is running for Westchester County Legislator in District 1 in the upcoming 2019 election, said he was horrified at the Trump administration's policies towards the immigrant community. "The policies are nothing short of divisive and inhumane. Locking kids in cages makes America ashamed, not great," he said, referring to Texas-based immigrant processing centers that had detained some 900 unaccompanied children inside chain link fences.

Deputy Mayor Kathleen Talbot was adamant about voting Trump out of office in 2020. Talbot reminded protesters that Peekskill's Chief of Police Donald Halmy claimed some time ago he would not target undocumented immigrants in the city. A fiery Vanessa Agudelo, also a Peekskill councilwoman, denounced the overall treatment of immigrants.

"Immigrants are just like us. They are trying to find opportunities for themselves and their families. That should not be illegal. That should not be criminalized. That is why they are here," she asserted.

Marianna Stout, Organizer of CD17Indivisible, which is a group living in Nita Lowey's 17th Congressional district, said, "A rally like this is very effective. We were able to influence the 2018 election by defeating former state Senator Terrence Murphy. Our hope is to hold rallies on a regular basis for the next year leading up to the presidential election. The future is what we're working for."

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