

NORTH CAROLINA

CHARLOTTE IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN BEGINS



ERIK VERDUZCO, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Willy Aceituno, left, makes a police report Saturday with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department Officer N. Sherill, after U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents broke his vehicle window during an enforcement operation in Charlotte, N.C.

Federal government didn’t previously announce enforcement push

ERIK VERDUZCO
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Federal officials confirmed Saturday that a surge of immigration enforcement in North Carolina’s largest city began, as agents were seen making arrests in multiple locations.

“Americans should be able to live without fear of violent criminal illegal aliens hurting them, their families, or their neighbors,” Assistant Homeland Security Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement. “We are surging DHS law enforcement to Charlotte to ensure Americans are safe and public safety threats are removed.”

Area officials, including Mayor Vi Lyles, released a statement criticizing such actions as “causing unnecessary fear and uncertainty.”

“We want people in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to know we stand with all residents who simply want to go about their lives,” it said.

Crime is down in the city this year through August, compared with the same

months in 2024. Homicides, rapes, robberies and motor vehicle thefts fell by over 20%, according to AH DataLytics.

Still, President Donald Trump’s administration seized on the stabbing death of Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutskaha on a Charlotte light-rail train to argue that Democratic-led cities fail to protect residents. A man with a lengthy criminal record was charged with her murder.

The federal government didn’t previously announce the push but County Sheriff Garry McFadden said this past week that two federal officials told him Customs agents would arrive soon.

Charlotte is a racially diverse city of more than 900,000 residents, including more than 150,000 who are foreign-born, according to officials there.

Willy Aceituno, a Honduran-born U.S. citizen, was on his way to work Saturday when he saw “a lot of Latinos running,” chased by “a lot of Border Patrol agents.”

Aceituno, 46, said he was stopped twice by Border Patrol agents. During the second encounter, they forced him from his vehicle

after breaking the window and threw him to the ground.

“I told them, ‘I’m an American citizen,’” he said. “They wanted to know where I was born, or they didn’t believe I was an American citizen.”

After being forcibly taken into a Border Patrol vehicle, Aceituno said, he was finally released after showing documents proving his citizenship. He had to walk some distance back to his vehicle and later filed a police report over the broken glass.

Spokesperson Paola Garcia of Camino, a bilingual nonprofit serving families in Charlotte, said she and her colleagues observed an increase in stops by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents since Friday.

Greg Asciutto, executive director of the community development group CharlotteEast, said via email that the “significant border patrol activity” was seen Saturday.

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Bill seeks to reestablish wolf population goal

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State lawmakers have reintroduced a proposal to create a population goal for gray wolves — a limit that would be enforced if the predator is delisted as an endangered species.

Like a similar bill introduced in 2023, the proposal — led by state Rep. Chanz Green, R-Grand View, and Sen. Rob Stafsholt, R-New Richmond — would not set a specific wolf population goal, but instead would require the state Department of Natural Resources to “include a specific numerical population goal for wolves in the state’s wolf management plan,” according to a memo seeking co-sponsors for the proposal.

The state Natural Resources Board in 2023 approved a new wolf management plan that leaves out a specific popula-

tion goal but directs the DNR to monitor the state’s wolf population to determine what actions are necessary to help maintain, grow or reduce it.

A previous version of the board’s proposal sought to maintain a gray wolf population of about 1,000 wolves.

The case for it

After the Natural Resources Board shifted away from a specific population goal in 2023, Green and Stafsholt, introduced legislation to require a statewide limit on gray wolves.

The bill was passed by the GOP-controlled Legislature but vetoed by Democratic Gov. Tony Evers. Republican efforts to overturn the governor’s veto failed.

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GARY KRAMER, USFWS

This photo provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shows a gray wolf in April 2008.