

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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February 10, 2026

Attorney General Austin Knudsen
Montana Department of Justice
P.O. Box 201401
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Attorney General Knudsen,

I am writing to formally request that your office initiate an investigation into recent actions taken by local governments across the State of Montana that may be in violation of House Bill 200 (HB 200), which I signed into law in 2021. I appreciate your willingness to investigate this matter.

Securing the border has been a top priority of President Donald J. Trump after the previous administration let nearly 11 million illegal immigrants enter freely into the United States under their watch. Since taking office, President Trump has directed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to lead efforts to deport criminals who broke the law and entered our country illegally. These agents serve a vital role in keeping our country safe. It's also important that agents within those agencies follow the law.

Unfortunately, recent events across our nation have put the men and women of ICE and CBP in difficult situations that have resulted in the loss of life. I'm grateful President Trump and his administration are committed to fully investigating any tragedy. However, these recent events are not a license for local governments across our state to ignore laws enacted by the Montana State Legislature.

As we've discussed, HB 200 prohibits local governments from adopting policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities or restrict the enforcement of federal immigration laws. However, recent developments suggest a coordinated effort by some Montana cities to circumvent the spirit and letter of this law.

In January, the Helena City Commission passed a resolution by a 4-1 vote that explicitly states its support for local law enforcement to not get involved in actions to assist "other law enforcement agencies" when they "stop, pursue, interrogate, investigate, or otherwise detain a person based solely on their immigration status or suspected violations of immigration law." This resolution is clearly designed to obstruct federal law enforcement operations.

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HB 200 was designed specifically to prevent the kind of defiance we have seen in recent weeks. I ask that the Montana Department of Justice investigate the specific language of the resolution from the Helena City Council to determine if it is a policy or practice that restricts federal immigration enforcement.

If such violations are found, I ask that you exercise the enforcement mechanisms provided under state law to bring the any city that may have taken this sort of action back into compliance.

According to HB 200, any local government or state agency may be fined up to \$10,000 for every five days it does not comply with state law. If your office determines any jurisdiction is not in compliance and a court agrees, funds distributed from the Montana Coal Endowment Program or the Montana Coal Board to those jurisdictions must be halted.

Thank you for your service to Montana and for your continued efforts to uphold the safety and sovereignty of our state and our nation. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte
Governor