CRAWLSPACE ANALYSIS

Assessment: Socialists in Office and the Police

Open-Source Assessment: What DSA's Mayors and Legislators Have Done, and Can Do, About the Police, ICE and the NSPM-7 Cases

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Information cut-off: 14 November 2026

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Scope Note

This assessment examines what democratic socialists do with the police once they hold office, and what the socialists elected in November 2026 can do about the police, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the federal prosecutions brought under National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 (NSPM-7).

It sets two mayors side by side. Bernie Sanders ran Burlington, Vermont, from 1981 to 1989. Zohran Mamdani has run New York City since 1 January 2026. Both are democratic socialists, both came to office with support from people to their left, and both ended up directing police against protesters on that left. The assessment then places the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) candidates who won on 3 November 2026 against that record: three mayors-elect, eight members of the U.S. House, dozens of state legislators and a handful of local officials.

The last chapters turn from record to power. They compare what these officials can do with what Crawlspace's assessment of the NSPM-7 cases found would most help the defendants in Minneapolis and North Texas, and with what Crawlspace has learned about the companies that sell surveillance to ICE and to city police.

- An official's statement is a claim by that official. A vote, a cosponsorship, a signed letter or an enacted law is a matter of record, and we say which we are relying on.
- We name officials, candidates and public figures. We name no one on the basis of resemblance, and we record no home addresses, dates of birth or identification numbers.
- Chapters 6 and 7 contain our own estimates about what officials are likely to do. They are not predictions of any vote or court ruling.

The information cut-off is 14 November 2026. Sources are cited in the notes and listed in the Bibliography.

Estimative language

TERM	MEANING
Almost certainly	90–99%
Very likely	80–90%
Likely, probably	55–80%
Roughly even chance	45–55%
Unlikely	20–45%
Remote	1–5%

Confidence levels reflect the quality of the sources, not the likelihood of the event. High confidence rests on primary records or several independent sources. Moderate confidence rests on credible but incomplete sourcing. Low confidence rests on fragmentary or single-source information, or on inference.

Key Judgments

KJ	JUDGMENT	CONFIDENCE
1	Every socialist who has won a big-city executive office since 2020 dropped “defund” before taking office and kept or hired a mainstream chief	High
2	Socialist mayors break with the left over protest policing, not crime policy	High
3	An organized DSA chapter is now the only proven check on a DSA mayor’s police budget	Moderate
4	The 2026 House class aims its abolition language at ICE, not at city police	High
5	From January 2027 Congress can bring out records the NSPM-7 defendants need, but it cannot end their prosecutions	Moderate
6	Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib vote together on ICE money and split on abolition and surveillance bills	High
7	The 2026 state bills against ICE and for police accountability were stopped by governors, speakers and tied chambers, not by DSA legislators	High
8	ICE’s spending on movement-relevant surveillance is rising fast, and the local levers against it are mostly unused	Moderate

KJ1. The socialists who win executive office stop calling for cuts before they get there. We assess with high confidence that a DSA-aligned mayor elected in 2026 will not cut police headcount in their first year. Mamdani called for defunding the NYPD in 2020 and said in 2025 that he was “not defunding the police.” Janeese Lewis George said in 2019 that she would “absolutely divest” from the Washington police, and now says she has voted for every police budget since 2021. Nithya Raman posted “defund the police” in 2020 and now says she does not want Los Angeles police staffing to fall further. David Morales in Providence has promised to keep the force at its current size and keep its chief.[1]

KJ2. The fights with the left come over protest policing. We assess with high confidence that the first open break between a new DSA mayor and the movement that elected them will come over how police handle protests. Sanders opposed the

1983 blockade of Burlington's General Electric weapons plant, and protesters were arrested. Mamdani's office praised the police after 66 anti-ICE protesters were arrested in a Tribeca hotel lobby in January 2026, and a DSA congressional nominee later called for his police commissioner to step down.[2]

KJ3. The chapter, not the mayor, is where abolition now lives. We assess with moderate confidence that an organized DSA chapter can win budget fights against its own mayor. Mamdani proposed 580 more officers in June 2026. New York City DSA publicly rebuked him, and the final budget dropped the increase. No chapter has yet tested the same leverage in Los Angeles, Washington or Providence.[3]

KJ4. The new members of Congress are aimed at ICE. We assess with high confidence that ICE, not city police, is the shared target of the eight DSA-endorsed House members. Rashida Tlaib is the only one on record saying policing as such should end. Claire Valdez and Angela Gonzales-Torres campaigned to abolish ICE. Melat Kiros publicly rejected DSA's plank on law enforcement before taking office.[4]

KJ5. Congress can get documents, not dismissals. We assess with moderate confidence that House committees will seek records on NSPM-7 and on ICE's investigative arm, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), after Democrats take control in January 2027. Tlaib already sits on the Oversight Committee, whose incoming chair has named DHS and ICE abuses among his targets. The records the defendants most need, such as written directions on whom to charge and the FBI's 2018 file closing its first investigation of "Antifa DFW", are the kind a committee can demand. No committee can end a pending prosecution.[5]

KJ6. The two incumbents agree on money and split on abolition. We assess with high confidence that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib will keep voting against ICE funding. Both voted against all three 2026 bills that funded ICE, including the $70 billion Secure America Act, and both signed the August 2026 letter demanding NSPM-7 be withdrawn. Tlaib cosponsors the bills that would end immigration detention, impose a moratorium on DHS surveillance technology and ban federal facial recognition. Ocasio-Cortez cosponsors none of them and has not said why.[6]

KJ7. The statehouse blocks came from the top. We assess with high confidence that DSA legislators were not the obstacle to state laws against ICE in 2026. In New York, a majority of both houses sponsored the full New York for All Act, and it never left committee. In Minnesota a 67–67 House stopped the bills written after Operation Metro Surge. In Vermont a Democratic committee chair led the opposition to an ICE mask ban, calling it unconstitutional.[7]

KJ8. The surveillance market is growing faster than the response to it. We assess with moderate confidence that ICE's buying of tools for watching people online and tracking their phones will keep growing in 2027. ICE's direct contract obligations to PenLink, the company that sells the Tangles social media tool and the Webloc phone-location tool, rose from $3.4 million in 2019 to $11.9 million in fiscal 2026, and ICE has signed a $50 million vehicle for both products through 2031. Washington is the only state in this assessment that limited what local police may pass to federal agents from their own surveillance systems in 2026. No city led by a socialist has withdrawn its officers from a Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), the FBI-run units that NSPM-7 directs to carry out its aims.[8]

1. Background: Three Traditions and the Police

IN BRIEF

- Social democrats, democratic socialists and anarchists start from the same analysis: police protect property and the existing order.
- They split over what to do about it. Social democrats aim to govern the police, democratic socialists divide between governing and abolishing them, and anarchists aim to make them unnecessary.
- The relationship has run through the same cycle for 140 years: shared repression, alliance, a split over tactics, a socialist in office, and a memory that shapes the next round.
- Inside the electoral left, the deepest disagreement is whether police officers are workers.

1.1 What each tradition means by “the police”

Social democracy grew out of the German Social Democratic Party’s turn toward reform at the end of the nineteenth century. In America it ran through the right wing of the Socialist Party, Max Shachtman’s followers and Bayard Rustin, whose 1965 essay “From Protest to Politics” urged the movement into coalition government. A party that expects to govern sees police as a public service and a public workforce, something to make honest, efficient and well paid.

Democratic socialism in the American sense descends from Eugene Debs’s Socialist Party and from Michael Harrington, who founded the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee in 1973. It merged with the New American Movement to form DSA in 1982. For most of its history DSA held a Marxist theory of the state, in which police are among the “special bodies of armed men” that keep one class in power, while governing cities in practice much as social democrats did. That gap is the tradition’s oldest tension. After 2014, and especially after 2020, the abolitionist

politics of Critical Resistance and Mariame Kaba moved into DSA. The 2021 convention adopted DSA's first national platform, and a later convention resolution states that under that platform DSA "supports abolishing the police, ICE, and the carceral state."[9]

Anarchism treats police as the state in its plainest form: organized force used to impose someone else's order. That does not mean anarchists expect a society without any coercion. Murray Bookchin, writing in 2000 as he moved from anarchism to what he called communalism, argued that popular assemblies must be able to take on every function the state now performs, including those of soldiers and police. The disagreement with socialists is not over whether communities keep order. It is over who holds the force, and whether a separate professional body of armed people should exist at all.[10]

1.2 Repressed together, then divided over tactics

For the first generation of American radicalism, the police drew no line between anarchists, socialists and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The Haymarket bombing in Chicago in May 1886 led to the hanging of four anarchists, and the anti-radical police squads that grew out of it watched the whole left. The 1917–1920 crackdown sent Debs to prison and deported Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman.

The electoral left then drew its own line. In 1913 the Socialist Party recalled IWW leader Bill Haywood from its national executive committee for advocating sabotage. Debs wrote that the IWW was "an anarchist organization in all except in name" and that "Anarchism and Socialism have never mixed and never will." The pattern has recurred ever since. Electoral socialists need respectability to win votes, so they draw a line against direct action and street fighting, and to anarchists that looks like sorting the movement on the state's behalf.[11]

The modern form of the argument is over "diversity of tactics", the position that a movement should not police its own members' tactics. During Occupy in 2012, Chris Hedges called the black bloc "the cancer in Occupy." David Graeber answered with an

open letter titled “Concerning the Violent Peace-Police”, arguing that marshals who restrain or hand over other protesters become a police force inside the movement. The fear behind that phrase matters for this assessment, because it is how many anarchists will read any civilian unit a socialist mayor creates to manage protests.[12]

1.3 Three ways socialists have run the police

American municipal socialism shows three repeated strategies once a socialist takes office.

The first treats police as labor. Milwaukee’s “sewer socialists” governed the city for most of 1910–1960, and Mayor Daniel Hoan reformed the police and fire departments by introducing a merit system, raising pay and funding training. Time put him on its cover in 1936 as the “Marxist Mayor.” Hoan could fund the police but not command them: Milwaukee’s Fire and Police Commission had held sole power to select and remove chiefs since 1885, and Chief John Janssen served from 1888 until 1921, through the first five years of Hoan’s tenure.[13]

The second confronts the chief. Dennis Kucinich, Cleveland’s populist mayor, fired police chief Richard Hongisto on live television in 1978 after months of conflict, and the firing set off a recall drive against him. It shows why few left mayors try a direct confrontation.[14]

The third turns the police on the left. The examples anarchists cite are European. In 1929 Berlin’s Social Democratic police chief banned May Day gatherings, and when the Communist Party marched anyway, police killed an estimated 33 civilians, none of them party members. In Barcelona in May 1937, Republican police moved to seize the anarchist-held telephone exchange, and days of street fighting followed. American examples are smaller, but they follow the same course: the left governs, the further left protests, and the mayor defends the arrests as protecting working people or public order.[15]

A fourth posture comes from being on the receiving end. Socialists have been ejected, beaten and spied on by police under other parties’ mayors, and the tradition has a strong civil-liberties wing as a result. It opposes political surveillance and supports

limits such as New York's Handschu consent decree on police monitoring of political activity. Even in office, that wing usually pushes against police surveillance rather than for it.

1.4 Are police workers?

The clearest dividing line inside the electoral left is whether police officers belong in the labor movement.

The labor tradition, from Hoan through Sanders, says they do. Sanders said in June 2020 that he did not agree with anyone who wanted to abolish all police departments, and that police should be "well-educated, well-trained, well-paid professionals." The abolitionist wing says police unions exist to discipline workers. In June 2020 Seattle's King County Labor Council expelled the Seattle Police Officers Guild by a weighted vote of 45,435 to 36,760, two years after it had backed the guild's contract. A third, class-first current, associated with Cedric Johnson, argues that police violence comes from poverty and inequality and "cannot be fought through anti-racist training seminars." DSA now contains all three, from caucuses aligned with the Jacobin current to abolitionist organizers to a Libertarian Socialist Caucus, so a DSA official's police decisions are a fight inside DSA as well as outside it.[16]

Anarchists have their own divisions. Pacifist anarchists in the Catholic Worker tradition are open to marshals and nonviolent discipline. Insurrectionary currents reject marshals entirely. Communalists like Bookchin take part in local politics, which brings them closest to socialists and produces the sharpest personal breaks. Anarcho-syndicalists, who remember Barcelona, are the most hostile to socialists in office, and the dominant anarchist line on elections remains abstention.[17]

1.5 The cycle

Across 140 years the relationship between these traditions and the police has followed a recognizable cycle. Figure 1 sets out its five phases with the examples this assessment uses.

FIGURE 1

The cycle: socialists, anarchists and the police since 1886



Examples in phases 2 and 4 are discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Historical examples are described in chapter 1.

Assessment. We assess with high confidence that the cycle in Figure 1 describes both mayors in this assessment and gives the best guide to the 2026 winners. The phase that matters now is the fourth: socialists in office, with a police force they control only in part and a movement that will judge them by how that force treats protesters.

2. Sanders in Burlington, 1981–1989

IN BRIEF

- The Burlington police union endorsed Sanders in 1981, and he governed the department as a workforce to be paid and equipped.
- In 1983 he opposed a blockade of the city's General Electric weapons plant, and the protesters were arrested; one organizer says he supervised the arrests.
- Murray Bookchin, who had backed him, became his sharpest critic, and "publicity man for GE" became the line the episode is remembered by.
- Sanders still holds the labor view of the police and has endorsed and campaigned for Mamdani.

2.1 Police in the winning coalition

Sanders came to office with the police on his side. In 1981 the Burlington police union endorsed him over the incumbent Democrat, Gordon Paquette, and he won by ten votes. A 1983 profile in In These Times said he backed better pay and equipment for a demoralized force with very high turnover, and that "his support for the police won the endorsement" of the officers' association. His former chief of staff, Huck Gutman, told the Marshall Project that Sanders treated police as "labor" who deserved higher pay, and that Police Commissioner Tony Pomerleau, a conservative developer who had fought him over the waterfront, became an ally.[18]

The relationship lasted. When the Burlington Police Association endorsed Peter Brownell for mayor in 1993, it was the first time since 1981 that the union had not supported the Progressive candidate. By 1984 Sanders was also widening the mayor's role in city departments, including the police. The Burlington Free Press reported it, and Bookchin later quoted the report as evidence that Sanders was pulling power into his own office.[19]

2.2 The General Electric gate

The episode that defines Sanders for anarchists happened at a weapons plant, not a protest against the police. In June 1983 peace activists blocked the entrance to the General Electric plant in Burlington that made Gatling guns. Sanders opposed the action, and the protesters were arrested; the Boston Globe put the number at 80. Organizer Robin Lloyd told the Washington Post: “He came and supervised the police arresting us.”[20]

Sanders defended himself in labor terms. “Not everybody has the luxury of choosing where they are going to work,” he said of the plant’s unionized workers. The New Republic reported that he came around to opposing the sit-in after meeting the workers’ union leaders.[21]

The second episode was closer to home. In 1985 Barr Swennerfelt, Sanders’s own assistant city treasurer and a Quaker, climbed the GE fence during a Nicaragua protest and put flowers in the gun barrels. Burlington police arrested her. She says Sanders demanded she pledge to stop her activism to keep her job, so she left. At a press conference he called her arrest the “appropriate thing to do.”[22]

2.3 Bookchin’s break

Bookchin and the Citizens Party left had helped elect Sanders in 1981. By 1986 Bookchin had published “The Bernie Sanders Paradox: When Socialism Grows Old”, the main written charge against him. It accuses Sanders of building power in the mayor’s office instead of handing it to neighborhood assemblies, of rejecting town-meeting government, of a growth-first “productivist” socialism that treated environmental and feminist concerns as frivolous, and of allying with business over the waterfront. The essay barely mentions GE and never mentions the arrests. The line that stuck came later: Current Affairs reports Bookchin’s verdict that Sanders was “acting as a publicity man for GE, not the socialist mayor of Burlington.”[23]

The environmental break was fought at the ballot box. Environmentalists including Bea Bookchin and Sandy Baird helped defeat the waterfront bond for the Alden development in December 1985: a majority voted for it, but not the two-thirds it

needed. Police played no part in that fight.[24]

2.4 Sanders on police since

Sanders has not moved from the labor view. In June 2020, at the height of the defund movement, he rejected abolishing police departments and called for "well-educated, well-trained, well-paid professionals." He endorsed Mamdani in June 2025 and rallied with him at Brooklyn College in September 2025 and at the Kings Theatre in June 2026. He has said nothing in public about Mamdani's police commissioner or the Strategic Response Group.[25]

Assessment. We assess with high confidence that Sanders governed Burlington's police in the Milwaukee tradition, as a workforce to pay and professionalize, with one difference: he tried to pull control into the mayor's office rather than accept an insulated chief. The GE arrests are a small American example of the third strategy in section 1.3, defended in the labor terms of section 1.4.

3. Mamdani in New York, 2026

IN BRIEF

- Mamdani called for defunding the NYPD in 2020, then promised not to in 2025 and kept Commissioner Jessica Tisch.
- His office praised the police after 66 anti-ICE protesters were arrested in January 2026; he later required City Hall sign-off for protest arrests by the Strategic Response Group and now plans to disband it.
- New York City DSA forced him to drop 580 new officers from the 2026 budget.
- His civilian alternatives have launched smaller than promised.

3.1 From defund to “not defunding”

Mamdani’s politics on police were formed in 2020. That June he called the NYPD “racist, anti-queer & a major threat to public safety,” and in December he called for the department to be defunded and called it “wicked” and “corrupt.” By the 2025 mayoral race he had changed course. “I’m not defunding the police, I’m not running to defund the police,” he said in July 2025. In October he apologized to officers on Fox News, calling it “the apology that I’ve been sharing with many rank-and-file officers” in private. In August 2026 he distanced himself from DSA’s national platform: “we have our police force, we have prisons, we have jails.”[26]

His campaign promised a $1.1 billion Department of Community Safety, the disbanding of the Strategic Response Group (SRG), the NYPD’s protest and counterterrorism unit, and an end to the gang database.[27]

3.2 Keeping Tisch

On 19 November 2025 Mamdani announced that Commissioner Jessica Tisch had agreed to stay. Unlike Hoan in Milwaukee or Raman in Los Angeles, a New York mayor appoints and removes the commissioner at will, so keeping her was a choice. Pro-Palestine groups attacked it at once.[28]

The criticism grew after an ICE agent shot a man in the Bronx in October 2026. New York City DSA said Tisch "must get ICE out of New York and end NYPD complicity with these terrorists," and Darializa Avila Chevalier, a Mamdani ally and the party's nominee for Congress in the 13th district, said "Commissioner Tisch must step down." The same week, 17 democratic socialist officials and nominees, including Claire Valdez, signed a letter saying Tisch "must end police assistance for ICE operations and disband NYPD's Strategic Response Group — and if she won't, she must be fired." Mamdani said he had "no plans" to fire her.[29]

3.3 The Strategic Response Group

The protest arrests began in Mamdani's first month. On 27 January 2026 about 100 protesters occupied the lobby of a Tribeca Hilton Garden Inn where they said ICE agents were staying. SRG officers arrested 66 people. Through spokesperson Sam Raskin, Mamdani praised the protesters for exercising their rights and the police for their response, and the next day he restated his pledge to disband the SRG.[30]

Early in his term he also issued a directive, never published, requiring the NYPD to get City Hall's permission before sending the SRG to make arrests at protests. An NYPD spokesperson confirmed it to Politico after the SRG arrested more than 100 people at a protest near the United Nations in September 2026. Among them was Aber Kawas, who was elected to the state Senate in November. Mamdani said he saw no justification for using the SRG there, although his office could have stopped the deployment. The rule protects protesters only as far as City Hall chooses to use it, and it makes every SRG protest arrest one his office allowed. An abolitionist group told Politico: "This further confirms that regulating SRG deployments isn't the solution."[31]

On 12 November 2026 his spokesperson, Dora Pekec, said the administration "will disband the Strategic Response Group and separate protest response from counterterrorism." Politico reported a plan for a civilian unit focused on de-escalation, supported by NYPD officers who would "assemble nearby and could step in to conduct arrests if needed." Mamdani has pointed to the high rate of misconduct complaints against SRG members.[32]

That design is the question raised in section 1.2. A civilian unit that manages protesters, with officers waiting to arrest them, is the "peace police" that anarchists warn about, run by the city. Abolitionists will ask whether it shrinks the SRG's arrest power or puts a civilian layer in front of the same power. The executive order that would answer that has not been issued.

3.4 The budget fight he lost

In June 2026 Mamdani proposed adding 580 officers at a cost of at least $70 million. New York City DSA criticized the plan publicly, its strongest break with him to date, and the New York Times called it a rare rebuke. In July the final budget dropped the increase. Mamdani said he made the decision in consultation with Tisch, and Council Speaker Julie Menin said she was "deeply disappointed" by the "11th-hour decision."[33]

His civilian alternatives went the other way. The promised $1.1 billion department launched as an Office of Community Safety, which the New York Post reported had "just two staffers and a budget of $260 million." On the gang database, he stood with Tisch in January as she praised it, and in April said the NYPD had "implemented a number of reforms" whose results were "part of the active discussion." The New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) says he has moved closer to Tisch's position.[34]

Assessment. We assess with high confidence that Mamdani began where the abolitionist wing stands and has governed close to where Sanders did: a professional commissioner kept on, police treated as a public service, protest arrests approved. His distinct tools come from the civil-liberties wing: sign-off rules, a plan to disband the SRG, refusal to cooperate with ICE. Sanders never faced an organized DSA bloc that could overrule him. Mamdani does, and it has done so once.

4. The 2026 Winners: Mayors and Local Offices

IN BRIEF

- DSA-endorsed candidates won mayor's races in Washington and Los Angeles, and a DSA member won in Providence.
- Each said something close to "defund" in 2019–2021, and each now promises to keep or grow police staffing and keep or hire a mainstream chief.
- Their left politics have moved to ICE non-cooperation, unarmed crisis response, oversight and surveillance limits.
- The likeliest clashes with the left are over protest policing: ICE protests everywhere, federal forces in Washington, the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

4.1 Where they started and where they govern

Ballotpedia counted 164 DSA-endorsed candidates on the 3 November ballot. About 80 had won by 11 November, including two mayors on its DSA list, eight members of the U.S. House, 51 state legislators and about 20 local officials. Figure 2 sets the executives' earlier words beside what they have committed to in office.[35]

FIGURE 2

Where they started, and where they govern

EXECUTIVE	2019–2021		IN OFFICE
Zohran Mamdani NEW YORK · 2026	~~"defund" the NYPD~~ December 2020	→	"I'm not defunding the police" Kept Commissioner Tisch
Janeese Lewis George WASHINGTON · 2027	~~"absolutely divest from MPD"~~ 2019 campaign	→	Voted for every police budget since 2021 New chief through a PERF search
Nithya Raman LOS ANGELES · 2026	~~"defund the police"~~ 2020 Council race	→	No further fall in LAPD staffing Cannot fire the chief herself
David Morales PROVIDENCE · 2027	~~cutting police funding~~ About 2021	→	"I believe stability is important" Keeps Col. Oscar Perez as chief
Omar Fateh MINNEAPOLIS · LOST 2025	~~dismantle the MPD~~ 2020 Senate race	→	"Every response does not require an armed officer"

Years show when each took or takes office. PERF: Police Executive Research Forum. Sources in the notes to chapters 3 and 4.

4.2 Janeese Lewis George, Washington

Lewis George takes office on 2 January 2027 with Metro DC DSA's endorsement. In 2019 she said she would "absolutely divest from MPD and put the money into violence interruption programs." On the Council since 2021, she says she has "voted to fund the police budget" every year. Metro DC DSA's questionnaire supported cutting the Metropolitan Police Department budget by half over three years; she did not endorse that in her answers.[36]

Her platform would rescind Chief Pamela Smith's order directing officers to cooperate with federal immigration authorities, and run the search for a new chief through the Police Executive Research Forum, a mainstream police-management group. Washington's problem is federal force. The Pentagon has extended the National Guard deployment in the city through Inauguration Day 2029, at an estimated cost of $1.4 billion, and the Home Rule Act lets the President take emergency control of the city's police. Her version of the socialist-in-office dilemma is whether her police end up working alongside federal forces at protests.[37]

4.3 Nithya Raman, Los Angeles

Raman ran for City Council in 2020 on defunding the police and posted "defund the police" that year. Activists who backed her then criticize her later votes to expand the department. She voted to approve Chief Jim McDonnell in 2024, then said she would fire him over his response to the ICE raids and his refusal to enforce California's ban on masked federal agents. Hamid Khan of Stop LAPD Spying credits her opposition to license-plate readers from Flock Safety and Axon.[38]

Her platform expands unarmed crisis response to every neighborhood, strengthens the Police Commission and its inspector general, and looks at limiting what departments can draw from the general fund for liability costs; the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) accounted for $152 million in payouts in fiscal 2025. She "does not want LAPD staffing to decline further." She cannot fire the chief herself: the five-member civilian Police Commission decides, and her appointees need approval from a council that "remains largely supportive of the police department." At her first press conference as mayor-elect she sidestepped whether she still planned to remove McDonnell.[39]

Progressives fear the 2028 Olympics will bring "an expansion of surveillance." That, and the city's police use of the Webloc location tool described in chapter 6, will test her opposition to surveillance more than any budget vote.[40]

4.4 David Morales, Providence

Morales, a DSA member, "five years ago talked about cutting police funding" and has walked it back. He will keep the force at its current size ("I believe stability is important"), keep Col. Oscar Perez as chief and has met with police union leaders. He beat incumbent Brett Smiley in the September primary and won more than 80 percent of the vote in November. He backed Question 7, the city divestment measure that voters approved, which makes protest policing around Palestine solidarity actions his most likely test.[41]

4.5 Omar Fateh, the same arc in Minneapolis

Omar Fateh's 2020 state Senate literature "advocated dismantling the Minneapolis Police Department and creating a new public safety department." In the 2025 mayoral race he had moderated: he ran on expanding unarmed crisis responders ("Every response does not require an armed officer") and said he would not support Minneapolis police helping with crowd control at federal immigration actions. He lost to Jacob Frey and was re-elected to the state Senate in 2026, where he wrote the bill described in section 5.4.[42]

4.6 Other local offices

Several smaller offices give DSA winners direct power over policing.

WINNER	OFFICE	POWER OVER POLICING
Marissa Roy	Los Angeles City Attorney	Prosecutes misdemeanors citywide and defends LAPD in civil-rights suits
Aparna Raj	DC Council, Ward 1	Votes on the police budget and the chief's confirmation
Angelita Morillo, Tiffany Koyama Lane, Mitch Green	Portland City Council	Control the budget under the new charter
Alicia Perez	Bexar County Court at Law 13, Texas	Sets bail and sentences in misdemeanor cases
Debby Pope, Karen Zaccor	Chicago school board	Oversee school safety in a district that has removed police from schools

Sources.[43]

Assessment. We assess with high confidence that none of the DSA executives elected in 2026 will cut police headcount in 2027, and that each will act first on ICE non-cooperation, the cheapest change and the one most likely to draw a federal response. Civilian response agencies will very likely launch smaller than promised; New York's $1.1 billion pledge that became a small office is the base rate. The first serious break with the left will most likely come over protest policing.

5. The 2026 Winners: Congress and the Statehouses

IN BRIEF

- The eight DSA-endorsed House members agree on ICE and differ on city police.
- Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib vote the same way on every ICE funding bill, but only Tlaib cosponsors the bills that would end immigration detention or freeze DHS surveillance.
- In the states, the 2026 police bills were mostly responses to ICE, and most of them also bind local police.
- Where those bills failed, governors, speakers and tied chambers stopped them; every DSA incumbent we checked in New York sponsored the main one.

5.1 The House members

Two of the eight DSA-endorsed House members are incumbents. Tlaib wrote after the killing of Daunte Wright in April 2021 that "policing in our country is inherently & intentionally racist" and called for "no more policing, incarceration, and militarization." Ocasio-Cortez attacked New York's 2020 budget, saying "defunding police means defunding police" and calling the claimed $1 billion NYPD cut "a disingenuous illusion."[44]

Of the six newcomers, two have targeted city police, both in New York and both against a DSA mayor. Avila Chevalier wants the SRG "disbanded as quickly as possible" and Tisch gone. Valdez, whose platform is to "dismantle and abolish ICE", was arrested by federal officers inside 26 Federal Plaza in September 2025 with other state lawmakers trying to reach the floor ICE used for detention, and she signed the October 2026 letter demanding that Tisch be fired. Gonzales-Torres of Los Angeles ran on "Abolish ICE." Kiros of Denver said at a June 2026 forum that she did not agree with all of DSA's new platform, including its plank on law enforcement.[45]

The other two work on accountability. As a Michigan state representative, Donavan McKinney cosponsored bills requiring an officer's separation record to include any disciplinary investigation, revoking licenses for excessive force causing death or serious injury, and protecting the identity of people who file misconduct complaints. In Pennsylvania, Christopher Rabb's bill strengthening the state police-misconduct database advanced through the House Judiciary Committee on 17 June 2026, and he introduced a bill to stop Pennsylvania police from enforcing federal immigration orders for ICE.[46]

5.2 What the incumbents have done about ICE

Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib have voted against every 2026 bill that funded ICE.

DATE	MEASURE	OCASIO-CORTEZ	TLAIB
5 Mar 2026	H.R. 7744, DHS appropriations	No	No
27 Mar 2026	H.Res. 1142, final DHS appropriations	No	No
30 Apr 2026	S. 4465, extension of FISA Section 702 surveillance	No	Did not vote
9 Jun 2026	S. 2, Secure America Act, about $70 billion for ICE and Border Patrol	No	No

Sources.[47]

Only seven House Democrats voted for the January DHS bill. The Secure America Act passed 214 to 212, so every vote against it counted. Both members also signed the 19 August 2026 letter to Secretaries Rubio and Bessent urging the administration to "immediately withdraw" NSPM-7 and stop exporting it to foreign governments.[48]

They split on the bills that go further. Both cosponsor the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, the Ending Qualified Immunity Act, the No Secret Police Act, which requires immigration agents to identify themselves, and the articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem. Tlaib also cosponsors the bills below. Ocasio-Cortez cosponsors none of them.[49]

BILL	WHAT IT WOULD DO	TLAIB	OCASIO-CORTEZ
H.R. 7190, Melt ICE	End immigration detention and electronic monitoring, and move the money to community services	Original cosponsor	No
H.R. 7346, Drain ICE Act	Cut ICE's funding	Cosponsor	No
H.R. 9314, DHS Surveillance Technology Moratorium Act	Freeze DHS surveillance technology	Cosponsor	No
H.R. 10563, Facial Recognition and Biometric Technology Moratorium Act	Bar federal use of facial recognition	Cosponsor	No
H.R. 7766, Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act	Limit military equipment transfers to police	Cosponsor	No
H.R. 7046, Qualified Immunity Abolition Act	Abolish qualified immunity	Cosponsor	No

Sources.[50]

In March 2026, Tlaib signed a letter led by Rep. Adriano Espaillat and Sen. Ron Wyden asking the DHS Inspector General to investigate ICE's renewed warrantless purchases of Americans' location data, which names PenLink's Webloc product. Ocasio-Cortez did not sign it. She has not given a public reason for staying off the letter or the bills above.[51]

5.3 New York: a majority of sponsors and no vote

New York has the largest DSA bloc in any legislature, and its 2026 session shows where the blocks came from. The budget enacted in May banned 287(g) agreements, which let local police act as immigration agents, and banned detention contracts with ICE. It barred state and municipal employees from sharing personal information with ICE or using state resources for immigration enforcement, protected sensitive locations, barred law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while dealing with the public, and created the New York State Bivens Act, which lets people sue local, state and federal officials in state court when their constitutional rights are violated.[52]

What it left out was the police. The information-sharing limits apply to state and local employees "with the critical exception of police," and the NYCLU concluded that legislators "failed to clearly ban informal collusion between local police and immigration enforcement." That was the purpose of the full New York for All Act.[53]

The bill did not lack support. In the Assembly, sponsor Karines Reyes had 75 cosponsors, 76 of 150 members. In the Senate, Andrew Gounardes had 31, 32 of 63. Neither house's Codes Committee ever reported it out. Every DSA incumbent is a sponsor: Senators Jabari Brisport and Julia Salazar, and Assembly Members Phara Souffrant Forrest, Marcela Mitaynes, Emily Gallagher, Sarahana Shrestha, Claire Valdez and Diana Moreno. Figure 3 shows the sponsorship against the outcome.[54]

Two officials gave the reasons on record. Governor Kathy Hochul proposed letting local officials work with ICE when they had probable cause of a crime, then offered to bar information-sharing in civil matters while allowing it in criminal investigations. Her office called this "a common-sense set of policies to hold ICE accountable while protecting the constitutional rights of every New Yorker." Legislative leaders rejected the probable-cause version, and no agreement on informal cooperation was reached. Gounardes's account: "We did not have three willing partners willing to go that far." Asked in January whether Speaker Carl Heastie backed the bill, his spokesperson said only, "those are conversations we will have with our members."[55]

New York also funds the federal side. The NYCLU reports at least five JTTFs in the state, in Albany, Buffalo, New York City, Plattsburgh and Rochester, which "receive millions of dollars in state funding," and says Hochul has increased that funding by millions over the last few years. No bill to end it has been introduced.[56]

5.4 Minnesota: a tied House after Metro Surge

Minnesota's legislature met in 2026 after Operation Metro Surge, the federal immigration deployment in which agents shot and killed two observers in Minneapolis. Senate Democrats introduced bills to require rendering aid after a shooting, let the state's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension investigate shootings by federal agents, unmask agents, and create a state damages remedy against federal

officials, the Minnesota Constitutional Remedies Act. Fateh wrote the remedies bill with Sen. Bobby Joe Champion. “There is no legal path for individuals who have had their constitutional rights violated in which federal immigration officers can be held accountable,” he said.[57]

The House is tied 67–67, so no bill can pass without votes from both parties. Several of the bills passed Senate committees. In the House, Rep. Jamie Long’s bill creating a right to sue federal law enforcement for constitutional violations, written to apply “evenhandedly to state, local and federal actors,” failed in committee. Republicans cited a letter from the Minnesota Sheriffs’ Association opposing the remedies bill and called it redundant and costly for the courts. Rep. Jim Joy (R-Hawley) said: “We should be writing laws talking about this fraud that’s going on, holding people accountable, but yet the other side of the aisle comes in here, just focusing directly on ICE.”[58]

5.5 What passed elsewhere

Most of the year’s police laws in these states were written against ICE and apply to every officer.

Washington banned face coverings for law enforcement officers, federal, state and local, in a law Gov. Bob Ferguson signed on 19 March 2026. Its Driver Privacy Act, in effect from 30 March, requires police to register, report on and audit their license-plate reader systems and bars using them to help federal agents enforce immigration law, though it lets data be kept for 21 days, “far longer than police accountability activists had advocated.” Rep. Shaun Scott, who wrote in 2020 that “the time to abolish Seattle police was yesterday,” is the only cosponsor of the ICE Out Act, which would bar ICE agents hired after 20 January 2025 from becoming Washington police officers.[59]

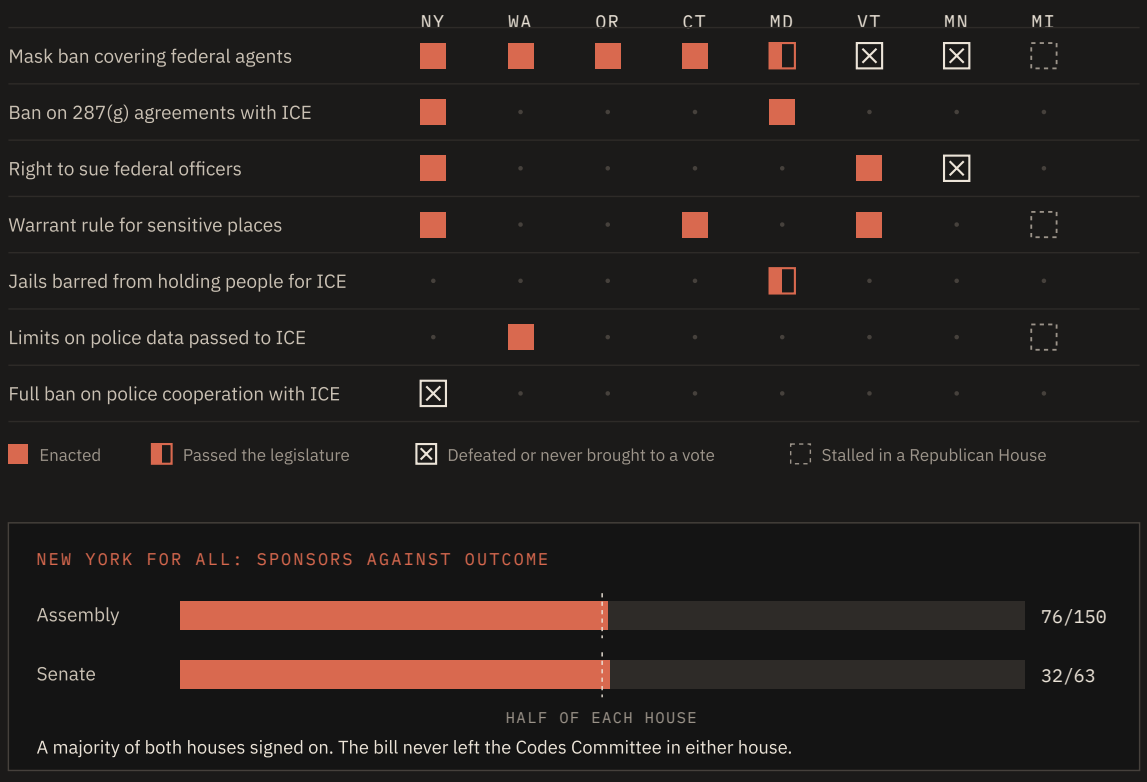
Oregon passed Rep. Farrah Chaichi’s Law Enforcement Accountability Act, which requires every officer in the state, including federal agents and officers from other states, to be clearly identifiable on duty and limits masks. Gov. Tina Kotek signed it on 9 April.[60]

Maryland banned 287(g) agreements in emergency bills Gov. Wes Moore signed on 17 February; within the 90-day window at least seven of the nine counties with agreements had pulled out. On the last day of session the legislature sent Moore the Community Trust Act, which bars jails from asking about immigration status or holding people for ICE without a judicial warrant, by 32 to 15 in the Senate, over Republican warnings that it would put "more ICE on the street." Del. Gabriel Acevero sponsored the 2021 bill to repeal the state's Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights, which became law when the legislature overrode Gov. Larry Hogan's veto.[61]

Connecticut's Gov. Ned Lamont signed a law in May banning masks for local, state and federal officers and requiring judicial warrants for ICE in schools, churches and hospitals. Vermont let people sue federal officials for constitutional violations through H.849, which Gov. Phil Scott allowed to become law without his signature, and barred civil immigration arrests in sensitive places.[62]

FIGURE 3

The 2026 statehouse record on ICE and police



Measures covered in chapter 5. Sources in the notes to chapter 5.

5.6 Where it stopped

Vermont's House defeated an amendment to extend its mask ban to federal agents by 65 to 77. A majority of Democrats voted for it, and six Republicans joined them. The case against it was made by a Democrat, Rep. Martin LaLonde: "I happen to agree that federal law enforcement should face restrictions on when they can conceal their identities. But I believe that no state, including Vermont, can impose such restrictions." Rep. Conor Casey answered that the House would never have led on civil unions if it had waited for every constitutional question to be settled. Sen. Tanya Vyhovsky, one of five DSA-endorsed Vermont legislators, defended the 2022 bill to end qualified immunity for police against what she called "red-herring scare tactics"; it was watered down after opposition from police and municipalities, and Scott's office said he was "strongly opposed."[63]

In Michigan, Senate Democrats' bills to restrict where ICE can make arrests, bar sharing records with ICE without a warrant and ban masks went to a House with a Republican majority. In the red states with DSA winners (Missouri, Tennessee, Georgia and Kentucky) the bills moving run the other way. Missouri's state takeover of the St. Louis police under a 2025 law is the clearest example.[64]

Assessment. We assess with high confidence that in the states where DSA has legislators and Democrats hold power, the 2027 agenda will be more of the same: ICE limits first, then identification, records and decertification of officers. Budget cuts to police do not come from statehouses. In New York the obstacle is the governor and the speaker, not the bill's support; in Minnesota it is the tied House.

6. What They Can Do About ICE, NSPM-7 and the Surveillance Market

IN BRIEF

- The NSPM-7 defendants in Minneapolis and North Texas need records that only courts or Congress can force out.
- From January 2027 House committees can demand them, and Tlaib sits on the committee best placed to do it; none of this can end a pending case.
- ICE's money to PenLink, which sells the Webloc tool found in the Minnesota record, has more than tripled since 2019.
- Mayors, councils and statehouses hold levers that need no act of Congress: JTTF membership, federal grant spending and limits on police data.

6.1 What the cases need

Crawlspace's assessment of the NSPM-7 cases, published on 5 November 2026, concentrated on two prosecutions. The MN 15 are fifteen people charged in Minneapolis after protests against ICE during Operation Metro Surge, in a case HSI opened under a file that cites NSPM-7. Prairieland is the case arising from the 4 July 2025 shooting at ICE's detention center in Alvarado, Texas, where prosecutors called a reading group a front for an antifa cell.[65]

That assessment listed what would most help each set of defendants. For the MN 15: written directions from Justice Department official Aakash Singh or anyone else about whom to charge; grand jury transcripts; five reports the government has withheld; proof that chats were captured without a warrant; and an undercover agent admitting under oath that no one planned to stop officers by force. For Prairieland: transcripts showing the government relied on a statement it knew was false; FBI records naming a defendant, especially from the bureau's 2018 investigation of "Antifa DFW", which it closed recording "No potential criminal violations"; a cooperator recanting under oath; and scene notes and scanner data.[66]

Most of these are in the hands of judges. Some are records a congressional committee can demand. The NSPM-7 assessment's own conclusion was that the new Congress could bring out records but "cannot end a pending prosecution." That is the limit on everything in this chapter. What an elected official can do is force records into the open, cut money, change law for the future and pull local police out of federal arrangements.[67]

6.2 Congress

Tlaib sits on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and on Financial Services. Oversight is the closer fit for the NSPM-7 cases. Its incoming chair, Robert Garcia, answered the election with "Lawyer up," and the committee has named DHS and ICE abuses among its targets. HSI, which ran the undercover operation in Minnesota, is part of ICE. Financial Services covers the money trail in the Minnesota case: HSI sent customs summonses, which need no judge, to the Fedwire and CHIPS payment systems for records of the Service Employees International Union, the Communications Workers of America and the Sunrise Movement going back to 2023, and asked that they not be disclosed "for an indefinite period of time."[68]

For Prairieland, the obvious target is the FBI's 2018 closure file and whether the Dallas U.S. Attorney's Office held it. A Judiciary or Oversight request for that file would test the government's theory that the defendants were a long-running cell. Jamie Raskin, expected to chair House Judiciary, has called NSPM-7 incompatible with the First Amendment.[69]

Ocasio-Cortez sits on Energy and Commerce, on its oversight, energy and health subcommittees. Energy and Commerce is the House committee for consumer data and data brokers, the market from which ICE buys phone location data without a warrant. The six new members take their seats in January, and their committee assignments have not been announced. On 3 January they can cosponsor the bills Tlaib already carries; Melt ICE has 16 cosponsors and has not moved since it was referred to committee in January 2026.[70]

6.3 The companies watching protesters

Crawlspace's ongoing investigation into who owns and profits from the companies selling surveillance to ICE and police shows where the money is going.

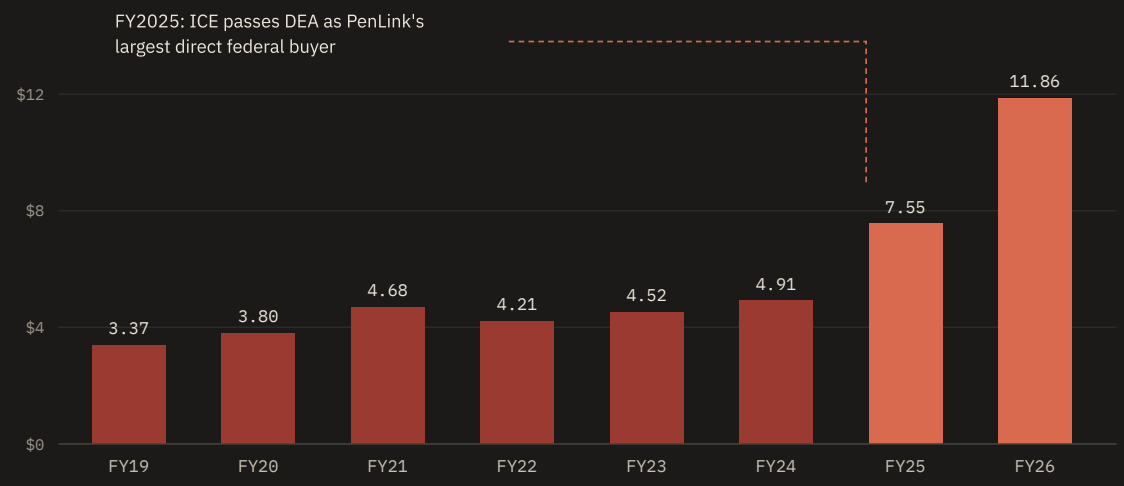
The company at the center is PenLink, owned since 2022 by the New York private equity firm Spire Capital. It bought the Israeli company Cobwebs Technologies in 2023, and with it Tangles, a tool for searching social media and the open and dark web, and Webloc, which tracks phones through commercial location data. Citizen Lab reports that Webloc draws on data from up to 500 million mobile devices. An HSI sheet on one Minnesota defendant lists "PLX, WEBLOC" among the tools run against him.[71]

ICE's direct contract obligations to PenLink rose from $3.37 million in fiscal 2019 to $11.86 million in fiscal 2026, and in fiscal 2025 ICE passed the Drug Enforcement Administration as the company's largest federal customer. On 23 September 2026 ICE signed a sole-source vehicle with PenLink for Tangles and Webloc licenses, with a ceiling of $50 million and running to 2031. The first orders under it were funded by HSI's Homeland Security Task Force and ICE's Office of Intelligence. ICE's 2025 justification for the purchase describes an open-source intelligence tool "integrating location data from multiple sources." Figure 4 shows the growth.[72]

FIGURE 4

ICE's money to PenLink, maker of Tangles and Webloc

ICE direct contract obligations by fiscal year, millions of dollars



23 SEPTEMBER 2026

ICE signs a $50 million sole-source vehicle for Tangles and Webloc, running to 2031.

Figures are obligations on USAspending, not payments. Sources in the notes to chapter 6.

The same companies sell to the cities these officials run. Citizen Lab lists police departments in Los Angeles and Baltimore and New York City's district attorneys among Webloc's U.S. customers. Federal justice grants pay for local PenLink licenses: Florida's Department of Law Enforcement made subawards of $300,000 and $240,000 for them in 2023.[73]

The movement is also being watched by private analysts. Flashpoint, which sells to ICE and the FBI, published a World Cup threat assessment in May 2026 reporting that "anti-ICE coalitions" and civil rights, labor and community groups in host cities had announced or promoted demonstrations. Los Angeles and the New York area are among the host cities. Flashpoint lobbies Congress and DHS through the firm Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman; PenLink and its owner have no federal lobbying filings. Derek Maltz spent a decade at PenLink as its executive director of government relations, served as acting head of the Drug Enforcement Administration from January to May 2025, and rejoined PenLink that June. These are questions a committee hearing can put on the record.[74]

6.4 Mayors, councils and statehouses

Local officials control the local end of the federal arrangements the NSPM-7 cases depend on.

The first is the JTTF. NSPM-7 tasks JTTFs directly with carrying out its aims, and a local officer assigned to one acts with the powers of an FBI agent under federal rules. Cities have withdrawn before. The San Francisco Police Department declined to renew its participation in 2017, Portland's council voted to withdraw two years later, and Oakland ended its partnership in 2020 after reports required by a city ordinance indicated that task-force officers had been deployed to watch racial justice protests. Mamdani has said nothing about the NYPD's place on the New York City JTTF, and the NYCLU asks how far that task force "can access the vast surveillance systems of the NYPD."[75]

The second is money. A council that approves a federal grant, or a mayor who signs a police budget, decides whether a city buys location data and social media monitoring. Raman takes office in a city whose police have used the same location tool HSI used in Minnesota.

The third is data law. Washington's Driver Privacy Act shows that a state can limit what its police pass to federal agents from their own surveillance systems. No state in this assessment has introduced a bill on police purchases of commercial location data, the market Webloc serves.

The fourth is protest arrests. The NSPM-7 assessment found protest records traveling into airport screening and trusted-traveler programs. A mayor who decides how police handle anti-ICE protests decides who enters those systems.[76]

6.5 Levers and their use

OFFICIAL	LEVER	USED SO FAR	WHO DECLINED, AND WHY
Tlaib	Oversight Committee; Financial Services	Votes, letters and abolition bills	—

OFFICIAL	LEVER	USED SO FAR	WHO DECLINED, AND WHY
Ocasio-Cortez	Energy and Commerce (data brokers)	Votes and NSPM-7 letter; not the Webloc letter, Melt ICE or the surveillance moratorium	No public reason
New York DSA legislators	New York for All; state JTTF funding	All sponsor New York for All; no JTTF funding bill	Hochul: police cooperation allowed in criminal matters; Heastie: “conversations we will have with our members”
Fateh and Minnesota DSA legislators	State remedies law; state investigation of federal shootings	Fateh wrote the remedies bill	House Republicans: redundant, costly, sheriffs opposed; the time belongs to fraud
Vermont DSA legislators	Mask ban; state remedies law	Remedies law enacted	Rep. LaLonde (D): unconstitutional to regulate federal agents
Mamdani	NYPD on the JTTF; the SRG; protest arrests	SRG sign-off rule and disbanding plan; no JTTF action	No statement on the JTTF
Raman	LAPD surveillance purchases; Police Commission	Takes office in December	—

Sources.[77]

Assessment. We assess with moderate confidence that House committee demands for NSPM-7 and HSI records are likely in 2027, and that Tlaib’s seat on Oversight makes her the DSA member most likely to be involved. We assess as unlikely that any socialist mayor withdraws police from a JTTF in 2027, because none has raised it. The levers most likely to be used are state ones: more mask, identification and data laws, following Washington, Oregon and Connecticut.

7. Outlook and Indicators

IN BRIEF

- Spring 2027 budgets in Los Angeles, Washington and Providence will show whether DSA chapters can do what New York City DSA did.
- The design of Mamdani's civilian protest unit will decide whether it shrinks police power or puts a civilian layer in front of it.
- House committee demands on NSPM-7 and HSI will show whether Congress becomes a source of records for the defendants.
- A new New York for All push, and any state bill on police purchases of location data, would be the clearest state-level signals.

7.1 What to expect through June 2027

We assess as very likely that no DSA mayor cuts police headcount in the 2027 budget cycle, and as likely that at least one DSA chapter outside New York publicly opposes a police budget proposed by its own mayor. We assess as likely that Mamdani issues an executive order creating the civilian protest unit, and as roughly even that it removes arrest power from the SRG's successor rather than relocating it. We assess as likely that a House committee requests NSPM-7 or HSI records by June 2027, and as unlikely that such a request produces documents before the MN 15 trial. We assess as likely that New York for All is reintroduced, and as unlikely that it passes while Hochul and Heastie hold their current positions.

7.2 Indicators

These would mean the left is gaining ground inside government:

- a DSA chapter forcing a police budget change in Los Angeles, Washington or Providence;
- a civilian protest unit in New York with no attached arrest team;

- a committee subpoena or document request naming NSPM-7, HSI's undercover work or the FBI's 2018 Antifa DFW file;
- Ocasio-Cortez or the new members cosponsoring Melt ICE or the DHS surveillance moratorium;
- a city council vote to leave a JTTF, or a state bill on police purchases of location data.

These would mean the pattern of this assessment is holding:

- mass protest arrests in a DSA-led city defended by the mayor's office;
- a DSA mayor keeping or hiring a chief over chapter objections;
- civilian response agencies launched without moving money from police;
- PenLink orders under ICE's $50 million vehicle growing in 2027, with no congressional inquiry.

Assessment. We assess with high confidence that the 2026 winners will repeat the cycle in Figure 1 rather than break it, and that the measure of the left's strength over the next year is not what its mayors say about police but whether its chapters, legislators and members of Congress use the levers set out in chapter 6.

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