

October 8, 2025

Chief of Police Thomas Mills  
Broadview Police Department  
2350 South 25th Avenue  
Broadview, IL 60155

Director Brendan Kelly  
Illinois State Police  
801 South 7th Street, Suite 1100-S  
Springfield, IL 62703

**Re:** Investigation of Assaults Against Journalists at ICE Facility in Broadview, Illinois

Dear Chief Mills and Director Kelly:

The undersigned press freedom and civil liberties organizations commend the Broadview Police Department for its swift action in [opening](#) a criminal investigation into the assault of a CBS News reporter by federal immigration enforcement agents outside the ICE processing facility in Broadview last month. The reporter was [shot](#) with a pepper ball by a masked federal agent in what she described as an “absolutely unprovoked” attack while she was reporting from her vehicle with no protesters present.

The Illinois State Police’s [assistance](#) with the investigation is equally appreciated. Investigations of attacks on journalists by government officials are rare. Journalists almost always have to turn to the civil courts for recourse. We hope you will commit to protecting journalists exercising their First Amendment rights and holding accountable those who attack the press. This would exemplify the critical role that law enforcement plays in safeguarding press freedom.

### **Concerns over assistance to ICE**

That said, we are alarmed by [reports](#) that state and local law enforcement may be [assisting](#) or enabling ICE in violating the rights of peaceful protesters. While these operations might have been intended to curb abuses by placing officers with experience in policing protests at the scene, instead it may be helping ICE further its unlawful objectives. This reportedly has included assisting ICE with arrests and unnecessary dispersals, clearing the way for ICE [photo opportunities](#) presumably meant to bolster public approval of the same violent operations that you are investigating. Images of state police [wearing masks](#) – and seemingly not the kinds that would protect them from ICE’s chemical agents – are also concerning. There are no secret police in this country.

Although we are unaware of assaults or arrests of journalists by state or local police, when peaceful protesters are attacked, the press is not far behind. The [Department of Justice](#) and appellate [courts](#) recognize that, even in rare instances when protesters may constitutionally be

dispersed, journalists are entitled to remain to document the aftermath. Unfortunately, law enforcement agencies often fail to respect journalists' rights despite those constitutional protections, as we recently saw when the [Los Angeles Police Department](#) was enjoined by a federal court from violating journalists' rights. We are concerned that this pattern will repeat in Broadview and Chicagoland.

Further, we are disturbed by reports of officers pushing journalists into "First Amendment zones" while allowing government videographers to record ICE up close, particularly during Kristi Noem's recent visit. State and local authorities should not be assisting with staging for ICE [propagandists](#).

### **Investigate attacks on independent journalists**

We also write to urge you to investigate documented assaults against independent journalists who, like the CBS News reporter, have been attacked while covering protests and ICE enforcement activities in Broadview. Independent journalists are often the first and most thorough reporters on the scene of newsworthy events, but their lack of resources relative to mainstream outlets makes them uniquely vulnerable to these kinds of attacks.

The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, a project of Freedom of the Press Foundation (FPF) has documented multiple assaults against independent journalists at the Broadview ICE facility. It is in the process of documenting several more. In addition, on October 6, 2025, numerous journalists and others sued over the violent response by federal law enforcement to the protests outside the Broadview facility. Their [complaint](#) documents several additional instances of assaults against independent journalists.

Many of these incidents followed ICE's reported promise to create a "[shitshow](#)" in response to criticism from Broadview Mayor Katrina Thompson, giving Broadview police a unique reason to investigate comprehensively. Federal agents operating in Broadview cannot be allowed to terrorize civilians to retaliate against elected officials for speaking the truth.

The journalists victimized by ICE include:

[Raven Geary](#) – On September 19, 2025, Geary, co-founder and reporter for Unraveled Press, was [shot in the face and shoulder](#) with pepper balls by federal officers while covering protests outside the Broadview ICE facility. A week later, on September 26, 2025, Geary was [shot in the face with a pepper ball](#) by federal officers while again reporting on protests outside the Broadview facility. According to the Press Freedom Tracker, journalists had gathered in an informal gaggle away from demonstrators when officers opened fire with crowd-control munitions from the roof and multiple sides of the building, directly targeting the press. Geary sustained injuries requiring medical attention at an urgent care clinic. She told the Tracker that the incident "felt like a direct attack on reporters," noting that the violence did not come out of nowhere. For weeks, she said, "These agents specifically have threatened us as reporters, they've tried to intimidate us."

**[Leigh Kunkel](#)** – On September 26, 2025, Kunkel, an independent journalist, was shot multiple times with pepper balls by federal officers while sheltering behind a van. According to her firsthand account and video documentation, she was first hit in the back of the head while crouched behind the vehicle, and was then struck in the nose at point-blank range, causing her to bleed severely. Video evidence shows ICE agents pointing their weapons directly at the journalists before firing.

**[Dave Decker](#)** – Freelance photojournalist Decker was shot with pepper balls by federal officers while reporting on protests outside the Broadview facility on September 26, 2025. Decker was directly targeted while sheltering behind a van and attempting to document ICE activities.

**[Wali Khan](#)** – Khan, a documentary filmmaker and journalist, was also shot with pepper ball rounds while covering protests at the Broadview facility on September 27, 2025. His work has included extensive coverage of ICE enforcement activities and their impact on immigrant communities.

**[Jon Stegenga](#)** – Stegenga, cofounder of the independent outlet Humanizing Through Story, told the Tracker that he was documenting one of a series of demonstrations outside the Broadview ICE facility on September 26, 2025, when federal agents advanced on protesters, firing crowd-control munitions. As Stegenga photographed these events, with clear press markings and credentials, a federal agent began firing pepper balls at him from about four car-lengths away. “The agent turned and shot once right below the belt on the upper thigh,” he said. “He turned at other people, and then turned back at me and shot me again, once in the leg and once in the back,” he told the Tracker.

**[Steve Held](#)** – On September 19, 2025, Held was shot with [a pepper ball](#) by federal officers while covering protests at the Broadview facility. Agents also physically [snatched](#) his press credentials from him. Approximately a week later on September 27, Held, who co-founded Unraveled Press with Geary, was [arrested](#) by federal agents while reporting on further protests. He was held for several hours before being released after midnight. His arrest occurred during an evening when federal agents escalated violence against peaceful protesters, legal observers and members of the press, after their above-referenced promise of a “shitshow.” He reported that agents [taped up](#) windows of his jail cell so he couldn’t report what he saw.

**[Amanda Moore](#)** – Freelance journalist Moore was [struck in the foot](#) by a crowd control munition while covering protests at the Broadview facility on September 26, 2025.

**[Leigh Giancreco](#)** – According to a [complaint](#) filed in federal court, Giancreco, a freelance reporter, was shot and struck with pepper balls repeatedly by federal officers while covering the Broadview protests for Block Club Chicago. Giancreco was wearing a helmet labeled PRESS, a neon yellow vest, and press credentials.

**[Charles Thrush](#)** – According to a [complaint](#) and a [sworn declaration](#) filed in federal court, Thrush, a freelance reporter and journalism student, was directly fired upon by a federal officer and struck with a pepper ball while Thrush was covering a protest at the Broadview facility on

September 26, 2025, for Block Club Chicago. Thrush was wearing his press credential around his neck and standing at a distance from the protesters when he was singled out and fired upon, and he had not been ordered to move.

**Colin Boyle** – According to a [complaint](#) and [sworn declaration](#) filed in federal court, Boyle, a photojournalist and director of photography for Block Club Chicago, was fired upon by a federal officer and struck with a pepper ball in the leg while covering a protest at the Broadview facility on September 26, 2025, with Thrush. Boyle was wearing a black backpack clearly marked PRESS and a hat with a Velcro PRESS patch and carrying two cameras and his Chicago Police Department-issued press credentials.

**Shawn Mulcahy** – According to a [complaint](#) and [sworn declaration](#) filed in federal court, Mulcahy, the news editor of the Chicago Reader, was shot with a rubber bullet or foam round by a federal officer while Mulcahy was filming an arrest at a protest at the Broadview facility on September 26, 2025. Mulcahy was wearing press credentials and a helmet marked PRESS, and he carried a notebook. Later that same day, ICE agents threw tear gas canisters at Mulcahy and a group of other journalists who were standing apart from protesters and clearly identifiable as journalists.

This is not intended as a comprehensive list. The Tracker continues to investigate reports of targeting of these and other journalists, including independent journalists and reporters from more mainstream outlets including the Chicago [Sun-Times](#).

We note that both Geary and Held were part of the reporting team that [undermined the official narrative](#) surrounding ICE's fatal shooting of Silverio Villegas González in Franklin Park. Their investigative journalism quickly disproved federal agents' initial account of that tragic incident. This not only demonstrates the essential role that independent journalists play in holding power to account, it raises the possibility that ICE agents directly retaliated against Geary and Held.

Independent journalists operate without the institutional backing, legal support, and public visibility enjoyed by journalists affiliated with major media outlets. This makes them particularly susceptible to retaliation, intimidation, and violence, and attacks on them should be treated with the same seriousness as attacks on better known journalists.

It also should not matter that there was no active protest when the CBS journalist was assaulted, whereas many of the other assaults occurred during or following protests. As discussed, journalists have a constitutional right to cover protests and their aftermath. In this case, [lawyers](#) and others on the scene at protests have said that the protests were entirely peaceful and that the violence the journalists were covering when they were attacked was instigated by ICE.

Investigating all instances of violence against journalists — not just those against reporters employed by major outlets — would further demonstrate your agencies' commitments to First Amendment freedoms. We hope you will do so.

Of course, your credibility in investigating ICE's attacks on journalists and other abuses is undermined when your officers facilitate illegality by ICE. As Broadview Mayor Katrina Thompson and Illinois Governor JB Pritzker [have](#) both [recognized](#), ICE are the aggressors in Broadview and Chicagoland. Any local law enforcement presence should be to rein in ICE, not assist them.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter. Please contact us if we can provide any additional information that may assist in your investigations.

Sincerely,

Chicago Journalists Association  
Committee to Protect Journalists  
Enchufate, LLC  
First Amendment Foundation  
Free Press  
Freedom of the Press Foundation  
Government Information Watch  
Indigenous Journalists Association  
Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE)  
Journalism and Women Symposium (JAWS)  
NABJ-Chicago Chapter  
National Association of Black Journalists  
National Press Photographers Association  
National Writers Union  
PEN America  
Radio Television Digital News Association  
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)  
RootsAction  
Society of Environmental Journalists  
Society of Professional Journalists  
The Association of Foreign Press Correspondents  
The NewsGuild-CWA  
Woodhull Freedom Foundation