

Sponsored by the Shut Down GEO Aurora Campaign and the American Friends Service Committee, Colorado

Governor Questions – Jeff Peckman:

Question: What have you done in your current elected office to directly confront DHS/ICE, and their operations, as well as to the operation of immigration detention centers?

Answer: I'm not currently in an elected office. However, as a candidate and author of "RAISE the ZONE" I am sharing my view that many actions and operations of DHS/ICE perfectly match the definition of "Domestic terrorism" in Sec. 802 of the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 that was passed by 98 U.S. senators. See my answer to question #10 for more details.

As Governor, you would hold a particularly important role in opposing ICE? In direct violation of state law, our current Governor has attempted to comply with the administration's subpoenas for private information of Coloradans. He has also been quiet about support for statewide bills protecting all Coloradans from warrantless ICE arrests.

First, yes, I would hold a particularly important role in opposing at least any actions by ICE that are unlawful, put Coloradans at unnecessary risk, or cause harm through overly aggressive actions.

c. What would you see as your role as Governor in these situations?

I would uphold Colorado laws that protect private information. I also view many DHS/ICE actions as matching the definition of "domestic terrorism" according to Sec. 802 of the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001. I would enact enforceable laws regarding domestic terrorism which recognize that fact and provide penalties for violations. I would protect Coloradans from warrantless ICE arrests. That will also first require enacting certain laws in Colorado. See #10.

d. What do you promise to do in office to oppose the sharing of Coloradans' information with the federal government?

I promise to oppose the sharing of Coloradans' private information when it conflicts with existing Colorado laws related to law enforcement and protection of personal privacy.

What is your stance and statement on private, for-profit immigration detention centers?

I oppose strictly private, for-profit immigration centers and lucrative financial incentives and quotas for DHS/ICE to arrest and detain people. I believe many of these for-profit centers are also rife with corruption, no-bid contracts, and insufficient vetting of manager, employees and armed agents.

I would explore a public-private partnership. The public, non-profit side would be about total transparency, oversight, inspections, various health and social services, compliance with local laws, etc. The for-profit side might include village industry type of enterprises where communities can invest in a cooperative that essentially hires detainees if they are being detained for extended periods. This would not be like prison labor, but just a way to enable them to engage in meaningful and productive work at reasonable wages that can help support dependents of detainees who are not detained.

If deportation is imminent, then such a public-private partnership could lay a foundation for productive work in other countries, and a pathway back to the U.S. after proper immigration proceedings. Funding would have to be a collaboration between the private sector and state and federal government. The profit would need to remain in Colorado.

Think of Medicare. It's not a for-profit enterprise in itself, but Medicare funds go mostly to for-profit healthcare businesses. Many of these for-profit businesses allow people to invest. However, to avoid creating an explosion of detention centers based largely on a profit motive, the profit must be tied to legal and humane treatment of detainees both during detention, and during deportation if that is unavoidable.

Under what circumstances would you take extraordinary measures to override other branches of government, in particular:

g. overriding the state legislature, comprised of two houses of representatives duly elected by the people, with the Governor's power of veto?

I would override the state legislature in primarily two circumstances. One is when the legislature passes laws that clearly put self-interested political motives above public benefit. The other is when the legislature ignores more affordable and effective solutions to a given problem, in favor of policies and programs that perpetuate a problem. An example of that is when legislators emphasize that a new law will create jobs, increase tax revenue, or secure federal funding, instead of emphasizing how their new law will actually solve the targeted problem.

h. overriding the power of the judiciary to hold fair trials in which juries of a defendant's peers determine guilt or innocence, with the Governor's power of clemency, pardon, or commutation of sentence?

This question is too broad and speculative for me at present. In general, I would use the power of clemency, pardon, and commutation of a sentence. I would also always intend to support the highest levels of justice. Each situation would be different.

As our community reports have articulated, there are gross human rights abuses occurring at the GEO detention facility in Aurora. The following factors have made oversight increasingly opaque: In early May 2026, Trump shut down the DHS Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO) that once oversaw reports of abuse and misconduct at detention facilities. Our current state Congressional delegation's efforts to visit the facility without notice have been hampered, and reports from these offices on the conditions within the facility have reflected a marked reduction in access. After a January 2026 complaint about a possible viral outbreak consistent with respiratory and GI symptoms at the facility, GEO staff blocked the Adams County Health Department from a full investigation.

What would you do in your office to break down the barriers that lead to increased morbidity and mortality within the walls of detention centers by ensuring oversight?

First of all, I would enact "domestic terrorism" laws that include penalties for the types of unacceptable acts by DHS/ICE described in the question. Secondly, I would create an office that takes on the relevant responsibilities of the DHS Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO), but as a state-level operation for Colorado. These two combined acts would provide the leverage and oversight to break down the barriers that lead to increased morbidity and mortality within the walls of detention centers.

How would you use the tools of your office, ranging from the Constitution to the newly-passed HB26-1276, to perform oversight?

Neither the Constitution, nor HB26-1276 are sufficient to ensure proper oversight and achieve the objectives of ending gross human rights abuses, while providing humane and proper treatment of detainees. HB26-1276 is a good start. However, it offers too little, too late, too infrequently, and with civil penalties that are too weak to sufficiently deter abusive treatment.

One tool of my office would be deploying the National Guard when needed. Another tool would be the threat of asset seizure, arrest and incarceration for violators of the "domestic terrorism" laws I intend to enact through Executive Order or in collaboration with the legislature.

10. In the case that Colorado is confronted with an ICE operation immigration at the scale and with the violence and negligence seen in Minneapolis in late 2025 into 2026, what is your responsibility to protect all Coloradans and to uphold their constitutional and legal rights?

My responsibility is first to protect all Coloradans. I feel that responsibility even as a citizen. Toward that end, I address this situation in my book, "RAISE the ZONE", which was written before I had any interest in running for governor. Following is my view as a candidate for governor and my approach to dealing with any scale of violence and negligence of ICE.

I think that the Polis administration, Colorado legislature and Democratic Party and politicians throughout the U.S. missed a valuable opportunity to prevent inhumane and atrocious acts committed by ICE. I believe they did that as a strategic choice. Consider the following:

In October 2001, the USA PATRIOT Act was passed by 98 U.S. Senators and signed into law by President Bush. It officially, simply, and concisely defined "domestic terrorism" as follows:

SEC. 802. DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC TERRORISM.

(a) DOMESTIC TERRORISM DEFINED. — Section 2331 of title 18, United States Code, is amended—

"(5) the term 'domestic terrorism' means activities that—

"(A) involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State;

"(B) appear to be intended—

"(i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population;

"(ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or

"(iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and

"(C) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States."

Who's a Terrorist?

By any measure, many of the acts of ICE and the Trump administration perfectly match the official definition of "domestic terrorism" in the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001. Despite this definition, U.S. law provides no penalties and leaves it to states to deal with offenses of domestic terrorism. These vary a lot across the U.S. Almost 40% of states, including Colorado, have not criminalized it.

A recent attempt to redefine the term "domestic terrorist" is the *National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM-7)* signed by President Trump on September 25, 2025. It was for

“establishing a comprehensive strategy to investigate, disrupt, and dismantle all stages of organized political violence and domestic terrorism.” The memorandum has been criticized for vagueness and lacking details, while being aimed primarily at opponents of POTUS’ unconstitutional policies. However, as far as I can tell, none of the news media, Democrats, or activists made reference to domestic terrorism as defined in the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001, when criticizing it. Why not?

I believe the Democrats and their allies in the news media and activist groups did that as a strategic choice. It seems they did not want to end the abuse by ICE, but counted on it as a perceived political advantage in the upcoming mid-term election. At most, Colorado laws commit Colorado government to collaborate with federal agencies on their enforcement of the USA PATRIOT Act. Much of that has to do with sharing information and surveillance.

My policy to deal with aggressive immigration enforcement would entail the following:

1. Enact enforceable state laws against domestic terrorism, using the “official” definition of domestic terrorism in the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001, Section 802.
2. Publicize this new law throughout Colorado law enforcement, the U.S., and the world.
3. Announce definitively, that if and when the federal administration or its agents or representatives engage in acts that violate Colorado’s new law regarding domestic terrorism, Colorado will strictly enforce the law against perpetrators, no matter their position or role in any sector or level of government.
4. Prosecute collaboration with perpetrators of domestic terrorism, regardless of whether the collaboration is by public officials, private citizens, or state or local law enforcement.

These collective actions would create the proper mindset to ensure that state and local law enforcement strictly adhere to Colorado laws that prohibit cooperation with violent and negligent actions of ICE.

Opponents of abuses by ICE can thoroughly educate law enforcement and the public about the official definition of “domestic terrorism” in relation to acts by the Trump administration. They don’t need to wait for the results of Colorado’s 2026 general election, or even wait another day!

11. What have you learned in meeting with directly impacted community members regarding the harms caused by DHS/ICE and detention within our communities? Please share about your experiences meeting with these groups and individuals.

I have not met any of the impacted community members. The solutions I offer are based on my knowledge about their harms that I’ve learned through mainstream news and social media, and email from various groups.