

# Private Profiteers:

How ICE Detention Center Contractors Exploit  
Immigrant Detainees with \$1 Per Day Pay

By Douglas S. Pasternak

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# Introduction & Key Findings

Most people would not work for \$1 a day or 12.5 cents an hour, even in the worst of times. Immigrant detainees have no choice. Working for \$1 a day in the government's so-called Voluntary Work Program (VWP) while detained is the only option available to earn any money for the more than [60,000 immigrants](#) held in hundreds of active detention centers across the United States by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency.<sup>1</sup> Tens of thousands of detainees participate in the VWP because it is their only available source of income while in detention and they are often coerced into participating or [threatened with retaliation](#) if they refuse to participate.<sup>2</sup> Estimates vary, but approximately 50% of those detained for more than a few days typically end up working in ICE's Voluntary Work Program.<sup>3</sup>

The private corporations managing the network of detention camps across the U.S. are profiting as a result, saving millions of dollars every year by not paying minimum wage to detainees or hiring outside help to maintain the basic operational requirements of the detention centers, including cooking, cleaning, maintenance, and other core activities that are essential to keeping the facilities operating. Instead, they pay \$1 a day to detainees and reap huge financial benefits as a result. As the number of immigrants held in detention swells under the Trump administration the number of detainees in these programs also grows, along with the [profits of the contractors](#).<sup>4</sup>

Immigrant detainees are held on civil charges not criminal charges. Some lack legal status, but many are [lawful permanent residents](#) of the United States with work authorization permits.<sup>5</sup> If they participate in ICE's Voluntary Work Program they are normally paid \$1 per day regardless of the number of hours they work.

In some instances, detainees have reportedly worked 14 hours a day for the same \$1 per day pay. In many cases detainees may only use their earned wages to [purchase basic necessities](#) at corporate-run commissaries with inflated prices where toothpaste can cost

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<sup>1</sup> "ICE Detention Trends," VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE (Updated April 2, 2026), <https://www.vera.org/ice-detention-trends>

<sup>2</sup> Jonathon Booth, "Ending Forced Labor in ICE Detention Centers: A New Approach," IMMIGRATION LAW JOURNAL, Georgetown University, (August 19, 2020), <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/immigration-law-journal/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/08/ENDING-FORCED-LABOR-IN-ICE-DETENTION-CENTERS-A-NEW-APPROACH.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Lauren-Brooke Eisen, "Private Prison Companies' Enormous Windfall: Who Stands to Gain as ICE Expands," BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE (October 1, 2025), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/private-prison-companies-enormous-windfall-who-stands-gain-ice-expands>

<sup>5</sup> "Nwauzor v. GEO Group Inc.," UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS, NINTH CIRCUIT, United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, No. 21-36024, No. 21-36025 (January 16, 2025), <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-9th-circuit/116874882.html>

\$11 for a 4 oz. tube.<sup>6</sup> In addition, many detainees have alleged in lawsuits that they were threatened with solitary confinement, denied medical care, or [loss of other privileges if they refused to work](#).<sup>7</sup>

An estimated [86% of the more than 60,000 immigrant detainees](#) currently held in custody are housed at detention centers run by a handful of for-profit corporations which are reaping immense financial benefits.<sup>8</sup> [George Zoley](#), the executive chairman and founder of The GEO Group, for instance, the largest ICE detention facility contractor in the United States, made \$11.3 million in compensation in 2025 alone, which equated to more than \$5,400 per hour.<sup>9</sup> He and the company's top five officials earned a total of more than \$21 million in compensation last year.<sup>10</sup> Overall, GEO Group's profits jumped from [\\$32 million in 2024](#)<sup>11</sup> to more than [\\$254 million in 2025](#),<sup>12</sup> as the Trump administration dramatically expanded the number of ICE detention centers and government contracts exploded.<sup>13</sup>

CoreCivic is the second largest immigration detention center contractor in the United States. In 2025, the former CEO of CoreCivic, [Damon Hininger](#), who retired at the end of last year, made \$7.2 million in compensation.<sup>14</sup> The top five executives at CoreCivic earned more than \$3 million each in compensation last year, for a combined total of \$20.5

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<sup>6</sup> Michelle Conlin and Kristina Cooke, "\$11 toothpaste: Immigrants pay big for basics at private ICE lock-ups," REUTERS (January 18, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/11-toothpaste-immigrants-pay-big-for-basics-at-private-ice-lock-ups-idUSKCN1PC0DI/>

<sup>7</sup> Letter: "Re: Retaliation Against Individuals in Immigration Detention at Mesa Verde Detention Facility and Golden State Annex," from American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) or Northern and Southern California, Freedom for Immigrants, Centro Legal de la Raza, California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice, and Innovation Law Lab to Department of Homeland Security, et. al. (September 12, 2022), <https://lofgren.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/lofgren.house.gov/files/9.12.22%20Mesa%20Verde%20-%20Golden%20State%20CRCL%20Complaint%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> "Immigration Detention Statistics: A Retrospective and a Look Forward," TRANSACTIONAL RECORDS ACCESS CLEARINGHOUSE (TRAC), Syracuse University (February 21, 2025), <https://tracreports.org/reports/753/>

<sup>9</sup> GEO Group, Inc., SALARY.COM, [https://www.salary.com/tools/executive-compensation-calculator/geo-group-inc-executive-salaries?year=2025#google\\_vignette](https://www.salary.com/tools/executive-compensation-calculator/geo-group-inc-executive-salaries?year=2025#google_vignette)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> "The Geo Group Reports Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2024 Results," Press Release, THE GEO GROUP, INC. (February 27, 2025), <https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/923796/000119312525037537/d886579dex991.htm>

<sup>12</sup> "The GEO Group Reports Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2025 Results," NASDAQ (February 12, 2026), <https://www.nasdaq.com/press-release/geo-group-reports-fourth-quarter-and-full-year-2025-results-2026-02-12>

<sup>13</sup> Nick Schwellenbach, Luisa Clausen, and Aarushi Sahejpal, "ICE, Inc.: The Top Companies Profiting from Trump's Immigration Crackdown," PROJECT ON GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT (POGO) (February 17, 2026), <https://www.pogo.org/investigates/ice-inc-the-top-companies-profiting-from-trumps-immigration-crackdown>

<sup>14</sup> CoreCivic, Inc., SALARY.COM, <https://www.salary.com/research/executive-compensation/corecivic-inc-executive-salary>

million.<sup>15</sup> The company's profits grew from [\\$68.9 million in 2024](#)<sup>16</sup> to [\\$116.5 million in 2025](#),<sup>17</sup> and both companies had well over \$2 billion in revenue last year, with GEO Group earning \$2.6 billion<sup>18</sup> and CoreCivic earning \$2.2 billion.<sup>19</sup>

Although it is a federal crime to hire immigrants without work authorization, for-profit companies running America's immigration centers are permitted to put immigrant detainees to work for just \$1 a day, based on a [1950s era law](#).<sup>20</sup> The battle for just pay for immigrant detainees has been an ongoing issue for decades. Congress has failed to address this issue and U.S. courts have traditionally held that immigrant detainees are "volunteers" and not "workers," which has denied them basic labor rights under the [Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938](#), which mandates federal minimum wage requirements.<sup>21</sup> Over the past year, however, federal courts have reviewed several cases revolving around unjust pay and unfair treatment in federal immigrant detention centers.

Among Public Citizen's key findings regarding the \$1 a day pay issue for immigrant detainees are the following:

- There are currently seven federal court cases challenging the \$1 a day pay in five states, including Washington, California, Colorado, Georgia, and New York.
- In February 2026, the [U.S. Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision](#) rejecting the GEO Group's efforts to dismiss a class action lawsuit against it regarding the \$1 a day pay issue at the Aurora Detention Facility in Colorado. This case will now proceed to a jury trial.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> "CoreCivic Reports Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2024 Financial Results," Press Release, CORECIVIC, INC., (February 10, 2025),

<https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1070985/000119312525023677/d518529dex991.htm>

<sup>17</sup> "CoreCivic, Inc. SEC 10-K Report," TRADINGVIEW (February 20, 2026),

<https://www.tradingview.com/news/tradingview:3fa0e7c2be8aa:0-corecivic-inc-sec-10-k-report/>

<sup>18</sup> "The GEO Group Reports Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2025 Results," NASDAQ (February 12, 2026),

<https://www.nasdaq.com/press-release/geo-group-reports-fourth-quarter-and-full-year-2025-results-2026-02-12>

<sup>19</sup> "CoreCivic, Inc. SEC 10-K Report," TRADINGVIEW (February 20, 2026),

<https://www.tradingview.com/news/tradingview:3fa0e7c2be8aa:0-corecivic-inc-sec-10-k-report/>

<sup>20</sup> "8 USC 1555: Immigration Service expenses," Office of the Law Revision Counsel, United States Code, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title8-section1555&num=0&edition=prelim>

<sup>21</sup> Fair Labor Standards Act of 1936, As Amended, U.S. HOUR AND WAGE DIVISION, Department of Labor,

<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/FairLaborStandAct.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> "Supreme Court rules against private prison firm alleged to have forced immigrant detainees to work for \$1 a day

Politics," PBS NEWS (February 25, 2026), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/supreme-court-rules-against-private-prison-firm-alleged-to-have-forced-immigrant-detainees-to-work-for-1-a-day> and Josh

- Last year, in January 2025, the [9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals](#), ruled that the GEO Group owes more than 10,000 current and former immigrant detainees who were housed at the Northwest ICE Processing Center in Tacoma, Washington, \$17.3 million in back wages and \$5.9 million to Washington state for “unjust enrichment” because they failed to pay the immigrant workers’ Washington state’s minimum wage, currently \$17.13 per hour. In January 2026, the GEO Group appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>23</sup>
- In several of the cases currently winding their way through federal courts immigrant detainees allege they were not paid at all for work they performed, and in multiple instances the lawsuits claim detainees were threatened or coerced into performing services for the private contractors running the immigration detention facilities, including [threats of solitary confinement](#), loss of privileges, and denied medical care.<sup>24</sup>
- In December 2017, the [U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](#) called for a halt to the \$1 a day pay saying they were “concerned” with “pressure” from private contractors running public immigrant detention centers and their efforts “to coerce detainees to perform labor in order to maximize profits,” and called for paying detainees a “fair wage.”<sup>25</sup>
- In January 2025, the [National Labor Relations Board \(NLRB\)](#) issued a formal complaint against the GEO Group, for retaliating against two immigrant detainees at the Mesa Verde Detention Center in California due to their support of a labor strike protesting the \$1 a day wages and working conditions at the facility.<sup>26</sup> However, President Trump fired the NLRB’s General Counsel that filed the

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Gerstein, “Supreme Court deals setback to ICE detention contractor in fight over detainee work,” POLITICO (February 25, 2026), <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/02/25/supreme-court-ruling-ice-detention-contractor-00797951>

<sup>23</sup> Ugochukwu Nwauzor v. The GEO Group, Inc. (21-36024), Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, COURT LISTENER, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/65407093/ugochukwu-nwauzor-v-the-geo-group-inc/>

<sup>24</sup> Letter: “Re: Retaliation Against Individuals in Immigration Detention at Mesa Verde Detention Facility and Golden State Annex,” from American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) or Northern and Southern California, Freedom for Immigrants, Centro Legal de la Raza, California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice, and Innovation Law Lab to Department of Homeland Security, et. al. (September 12, 2022), <https://lofgren.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/lofgren.house.gov/files/9.12.22%20Mesa%20Verde%20-%20Golden%20State%20CRCL%20Complaint%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> “U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Concerned with Alleged Abusive Labor Practices at Immigration Detention Centers,” Statement, U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS (December 21, 2017), <https://www.usccr.gov/files/press/2017/12-21-PR.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> “National Labor Relations Board Files Complaint Against GEO Group for Retaliation Against Workers at Mesa Verde Detention Facility,” CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE FOR IMMIGRANT JUSTICE (CCIJ) (January 9, 2025; Updated: January 14, 2025), <https://www.ccijustice.org/post/nlrb-complaint-against-geo>

complaint and a Democratic NLRB board member that same month.<sup>27</sup> The [NLRB officially withdrew its complaint](#) in February 2025, one month after Trump took office for his second term.<sup>28</sup>

- The meager \$1 a day pay that immigrant detainees receive is usually only good to acquire items at the corporate run commissary within the immigration detention centers that charge highly inflated prices for basic necessities and services. At these rates, it may take a detainee more than three days of work to purchase a can of tuna fish or more than two days of work to purchase a bar of soap.<sup>29</sup>

## The Voluntary Work Program

All immigrant detainees are required to maintain their own individual living space ensuring that it is clean. Those involved in ICE's VWP, however, perform "tasks that are essential to the operation of the facility," according to the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals.<sup>30</sup> This may include various [maintenance and operations activities](#), such as working as janitorial staff cleaning, stripping and waxing floors, preparing food, cooking meals, processing industrial laundry, cutting hair, working as library aides, or even performing clerical tasks for the private facility manager.<sup>31</sup>

Partial excerpts of a document that highlights a sampling of VWP jobs from ICE's Aurora Detention Facility in Colorado run by the GEO Group is pasted below:

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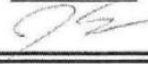
<sup>27</sup> Stacy Maiers, "President Trump ousts NLRB board member, general counsel," NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (January 28, 2025), <https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/president-trump-ousts-nlrb-board-member-general-counsel>

<sup>28</sup> Josh Eidelson, "US Labor Board Drops Case Over Prison Company's Treatment of Detained Immigrants," BLOOMBERG (March 19, 2025), (as retrieved on yahoo!news) <https://www.yahoo.com/news/us-labor-board-drops-case-223012134.html>

<sup>29</sup> Michelle Conlin and Kristina Cooke, "\$11 toothpaste: Immigrants pay big for basics at private ICE lock-ups," REUTERS (January 18, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/11-toothpaste-immigrants-pay-big-for-basics-at-private-ice-lock-ups-idUSKCN1PC0DJ/>

<sup>30</sup> "Nwauzor v. GEO Group Inc.," UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS, NINTH CIRCUIT, United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, No. 21-36024, No. 21-36025 (January 16, 2025), <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-9th-circuit/116874882.html>

<sup>31</sup> See: "Nwauzor v. GEO Group Inc.," UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS, NINTH CIRCUIT, United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, No. 21-36024, No. 21-36025 (January 16, 2025), <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-9th-circuit/116874882.html> and Jonathon Booth, "Ending Forced Labor in ICE Detention Centers: A New Approach," IMMIGRATION LAW JOURNAL, Georgetown University, (August 19, 2020), <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/immigration-law-journal/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/08/ENDING-FORCED-LABOR-IN-ICE-DETENTION-CENTERS-A-NEW-APPROACH.pdf>

	Aurora Detention Center POLICY and PROCEDURE MANUAL  <b>8.1.8-AUR</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> 5/06/13
	CHAPTER: Detainee Work Program TITLE: Detainee Work Plan RELATED ACA STANDARDS: 4-ALDF-2A-09, 5C-06, 5C-08, 5C-10 – 12, 6B-02, 6B-05	<b>SUPERSEDES:</b> 9/10/12  <b>APPROVED BY:</b> 

I. POLICY

To provide detainees the opportunity to participate in a voluntary work program and earn money.

II. PROCEDURE

A. Voluntary Work Program

General work assignments do not require specific skills. A sample of work assignments follow:

1. Kitchen worker (either shift)
2. Recreation/Library/Barber
3. Living area clean-up/janitorial
4. Area cleaning (inside facility)
5. Area cleaning (outside facility)
6. Evening workers (building janitorial)
7. Maintenance
8. Laundry

## Commissary Price Gouging

How immigrant workers spend their meager \$1 a day income is limited. Often their only option is to purchase items from a corporate-run commissary that has exorbitant mark-ups on basic goods and services. A [Reuters](#) story from 2019 found that a 4 oz. tube of Sensodyne Toothpaste, that cost \$5.20 on Amazon, was being sold for \$11.02 at the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia run by CoreCivic, and was \$9.00 at the Adelanto Detention Center in Adelanto, California run by GEO Group.<sup>32</sup> A “voluntary worker” at the Stewart Detention Center would have had to work full-time for eleven days earning \$1 per day to afford to purchase a tube of toothpaste.<sup>33</sup>

Canned tuna costing \$0.85 at Target was found to cost \$3.25 at GEO Group’s Adelanto Detention Center and a \$1.00 bar of soap at Target cost \$2.44 at CoreCivic’s Stewart Detention Center.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, while the average cost of a phone call to Mexico is \$0.05 to \$0.10/minute, or free using online services, GEO Group’s Adelanto Detention Center charges an estimated

<sup>32</sup> Michelle Conlin and Kristina Cooke, “\$11 toothpaste: Immigrants pay big for basics at private ICE lock-ups,” REUTERS (January 18, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/11-toothpaste-immigrants-pay-big-for-basics-at-private-ice-lock-ups-idUSKCN1PC0DI/>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

\$1.00/minute, an immigrant detainees' full daily wage if they are enrolled in the Voluntary Work Program.<sup>35</sup>

## Profit Motive

For-profit corporations operating immigrant detention centers save millions of dollars each year by paying detainees \$1 per day for their work at these detention facilities. While the specific numbers are hard to pin down, in one lawsuit against the GEO Group in Washington State, GEO Group testified that it would have required an estimated [85 full-time employees](#) if it did not utilize immigrant detainees at the facility.<sup>36</sup> If GEO paid these 85 workers the state's minimum wage, which is currently \$17.13 per hour it would have cost them a little over \$3 million per year. By paying immigrant detainees \$1 a day to perform the same work, GEO Group paid a total of \$22,100 instead, permitting them to save more than \$3 million at a single detention center.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals found that, "Because of the labor provided to GEO by the detained workers employed under this program, GEO operated its facility with just a handful of full-time staff hired from the local area, thereby saving millions of dollars that it would otherwise have spent on payroll."<sup>37</sup> The court also determined that between 2010 and 2018, [GEO's profit margins hovered between 16 to 19 percent each year](#).<sup>38</sup>

In this same case regarding GEO Group's management of the Northwest ICE Processing Center in Tacoma, Washington, where Washington State as well as a class of detainees sued GEO Group for unfair wages and related issues, the court found GEO Group owed the detainees and the state a total of more than \$23 million. Rather than acknowledging their wrongdoing, the GEO Group responded by halting the Voluntary Work Program at the facility altogether in lieu of paying the immigrant detainees minimum wage, according to a [May 2023, Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Office of Inspector General \(OIG\) report](#).<sup>39</sup>

[Another 2023 DHS OIG unannounced inspection](#) at the Caroline Detention Center in Bowling Green, Virginia, operated by the Caroline County Government found that

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> See: "Nwauzor v. GEO Group Inc.," UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS, NINTH CIRCUIT, United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, No. 21-36024, No. 21-36025 (January 16, 2025), <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-9th-circuit/116874882.html> and McKenzie Funk, "An ICE Contractor Is Worth Billions. It's Still Fighting to Pay Detainees as Little as \$1 a Day to Work," PROPUBLICA (March 19, 2025) <https://www.propublica.org/article/geo-group-ice-detainees-wage>

<sup>37</sup> "Nwauzor v. GEO Group Inc.," UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS, NINTH CIRCUIT, United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, No. 21-36024, No. 21-36025 (January 16, 2025), <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-9th-circuit/116874882.html>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Results of an Unannounced Inspection of Northwest ICE Processing Center in Tacoma, Washington," OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, Department of Homeland Security, OIG-23-26 (May 22, 2023), <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2023-05/OIG-23-26-May23.pdf>

“Caroline did not follow standards related to the voluntary work program.”<sup>40</sup> “Volunteer” workers exceeded the 40-hour work week limit. In one case a detainee worked 65 hours in 1 week, and as long as 14 hours in a single day. Another detainee worked an average of 56 hours per week during a 6-week period. The over-work was a result of understaffing at the facility.

ICE responded to the OIG’s analysis and recommendation to correct these failings by asserting they make efforts not to work the detainees more than 40 hours per week, but that they are sometimes understaffed. In response, the OIG said it was concerned that “ICE openly disregards” the voluntary work standard and that their “recommendation remains unresolved and open....”<sup>41</sup>

The issues impacting these facilities, however, go beyond fair wages. They also revolve around health and safety. In April 2026, for instance, reports emerged that GEO Group was preventing inspectors from the Washington State Department of Health from entering the Northwest ICE Processing Center. According to *King5 News*, an *NBC News* affiliate station in Seattle, Washington, the state health inspectors have attempted to enter the facility nine times since 2023 and have been denied access each time. The most recent attempt came on March 20, 2026, when inspectors were once again denied entry.

In addition, in December 2022, the [GEO Group was fined more than \\$100,000 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#) for six separate citations, including one “willful” violation of health and safety protocols at the Golden State Annex ICE detention facility in Bakersfield, California.<sup>42</sup> The GEO Group contested all six citations and the current status of these citations is not known.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “Results of an Unannounced Inspection of ICE’s Caroline Detention Facility in Bowling Green, Virginia,” Department of Homeland Security, OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, OIG-23-51 (September 15, 2023), <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2023-09/OIG-23-51-Sep23.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> “Inspection: 1609228.015 - The Geo Group, Inc. Dba Golden State Annex,” OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (OSHA) (June 15, 2022), [https://www.osha.gov/ords/imis/establishment.inspection\\_detail?id=1609228.015](https://www.osha.gov/ords/imis/establishment.inspection_detail?id=1609228.015)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

## Work But No Pay

Multiple lawsuits and other reporting have documented that sometimes immigrant detainees work at their detention facilities but are not paid at all. A [joint report](#) by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Human Rights Watch, and the National Immigrant Justice Center, detailing immigration detention under the Trump Administration, highlighted several examples of detainees not being paid even the \$1 a day wage, for the work they performed.<sup>44</sup> Among the examples in the report:

- “Immigrants at Richwood Correctional Center and Winn Correctional Center, both run by LaSalle Corrections, reported that they had not received payment or had not received full payment for their labor, even at the rate of \$1 per day. “I worked for a whole month in the kitchen but was paid only four dollars,” reported one man at Winn.
- Another person at Winn reported that he had not been paid for approximately five weeks of kitchen work.
- Several people at Richwood also reported that they had not received their promised payment. Oscar O., who worked in the kitchen at Richwood, explained that he was told he would be paid \$1 per day, but that at times this money had not gone into his account.
- Sherman reported that he worked for a whole month cleaning the grounds at Richwood, but had only received \$7 — payment for one week.
- Caleb D., who was detained at Tallahatchie County Correctional Facility, which is run by CoreCivic, said, “I’ve been working every day, but they haven’t paid [me] yet. I’m afraid not to work because they might think I am rebelling.”<sup>45</sup>

## Retaliation Against Immigrant Detainees

The very notion that the Voluntary Work Program is “voluntary,” is considered a misnomer by the detainees who have worked in this program for two reasons. They point out that they need to work in the VWP even with its meager wages in order to purchase any of the basic necessities they require, such as soap, toothpaste and even feminine hygiene products, “which are not otherwise provided to detained immigrants,” according

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<sup>44</sup> “Justice-Free Zones: U.S. Immigration Detention Under the Trump Administration,” AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION (ACLU), May 2022, [https://immigrantjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Justice-Free-Zones\\_Immigrant\\_Detention\\_Report\\_ACLU-HRW-NIJC\\_April-2020.pdf](https://immigrantjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Justice-Free-Zones_Immigrant_Detention_Report_ACLU-HRW-NIJC_April-2020.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

to a 2020 article in [Georgetown University's Immigration Law Journal](#).<sup>46</sup> In addition, detainees have alleged that the contractors running the ICE detention centers have retaliated against them if they refused to work for \$1/day pay.<sup>47</sup> This retaliation has included threats of solitary confinement, loss of privileges, denied medical treatment, and other retaliatory actions.<sup>48</sup>

In January 2025, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) filed a [formal complaint against GEO Group](#) for retaliating against two workers at the Mesa Verde Detention Facility in Bakersfield, CA regarding the “Voluntary Work Program” because of their efforts in June 2022 to organize and support a labor strike to protest the \$1 a day wages and the working conditions.<sup>49</sup> The complaint claimed GEO Group retaliated against Pedro Jesus Figueroa Padilla an immigrant detainee who was placed in “disciplinary segregation” for eight-days, transferred to another housing unit, and had his commissary privileges revoked as a result of his protests. Another immigrant detainee, Ruben Hernandez Gomez, was also retaliated against for supporting the labor strike, signing a petition to protest wages and work conditions, and filing a class-action lawsuit against the GEO Group regarding wage theft, underpayment, and forced labor.<sup>50</sup> For these actions Gomez was placed in solitary confinement.

However, [President Trump fired the NLRB General Council](#), Jennifer Abruzzo, who brought the complaint, and Democratic NLRB board member Gwynne Wilcox, as soon as he took office in January 2025.<sup>51</sup> The [NLRB officially withdrew the complaint in February 2025](#).<sup>52</sup> None of those political actions seemed to have a positive impact on GEO Group's treatment of detainees.

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<sup>46</sup> Jonathon Booth, “Ending Forced Labor in ICE Detention Centers: A New Approach,” IMMIGRATION LAW JOURNAL, Georgetown University, (August 19, 2020), <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/immigration-law-journal/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/08/ENDING-FORCED-LABOR-IN-ICE-DETENTION-CENTERS-A-NEW-APPROACH.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Letter: “Re: Retaliation Against Individuals in Immigration Detention at Mesa Verde Detention Facility and Golden State Annex,” from American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) or Northern and Southern California, Freedom for Immigrants, Centro Legal de la Raza, California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice, and Innovation Law Lab to Department of Homeland Security, et. al. (September 12, 2022), <https://lofgren.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/lofgren.house.gov/files/9.12.22%20Mesa%20Verde%20-%20Golden%20State%20CRCL%20Complaint%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> “National Labor Relations Board Files Complaint Against GEO Group for Retaliation Against Workers at Mesa Verde Detention Facility,” CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE FOR IMMIGRANT JUSTICE (CCIJ) (January 9, 2025; Updated: January 14, 2025), <https://www.ccijustice.org/post/nlrb-complaint-against-geo>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Stacy Maiers, “President Trump ousts NLRB board member, general counsel,” NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (January 28, 2025), <https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/president-trump-ousts-nlrb-board-member-general-counsel>

<sup>52</sup> Josh Eidelson, “US Labor Board Drops Case Over Prison Company's Treatment of Detained Immigrants,” BLOOMBERG (March 19, 2025), (as retrieved on yahoo!news) <https://www.yahoo.com/news/us-labor-board-drops-case-223012134.html>

Last year, The GEO Group, made the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health’s [“Dirty Dozen”](#) list of the 12 most “dangerous and reckless employers risking the lives of workers and communities.”<sup>53</sup> In its report, it wrote:

12. **The GEO Group:** The nation’s largest prison operator, valued at \$4 billion, forces detained workers to wash laundry, scrub toilets, landscape, and perform maintenance for just \$1 per day<sup>(1)</sup>. Though labeled “voluntary,” facility handbooks show refusal can lead to punishment—loss of privileges or solitary confinement in Pennsylvania, and in New Mexico, refusal is treated as “escape with force,” punishable by up to 365 days in solitary<sup>(2)</sup>. Workers face dangerous conditions. GEO has a history of sexual harassment violations, including a \$550,000 settlement in 2018<sup>(3)</sup> and a new complaint filed in 2024<sup>(4)</sup>. In 2022, Cal/OSHA fined the company \$104,000 for serious safety failures—no access to eyewash stations, poor communication on hazardous materials, and failure to protect staff from aerosol transmissible diseases<sup>(5)(6)</sup>. In 2021, Washington State ordered \$17 million in back wages and \$6 million for unjust enrichment<sup>(7)</sup>. Despite retaliation—solitary confinement, disciplinary write-ups—incarcerated workers continue organizing petitions, work stoppages, and hunger strikes to protest unsafe and exploitative conditions<sup>(8)</sup>.

**2025 DIRTY DOZEN**

**THE GEO GROUP**  
CAPTIVE LABOR.  
PERILOUS CONDITIONS

**\$1/day for hazardous work**

**Detained workers protest with hunger strikes, petitions, and walkouts to end:**

- Forced labor
- Unsafe tasks without protection or training
- Retaliation for speaking out

**VIOLATIONS & ABUSE:**

- Fined \$104K by Cal/OSHA for willful safety failures
- Workers punished with solitary for organizing
- Federal complaints allege sexual abuse & harassment by staff

**Detention isn't just torture, it's exploitation**

[www.nationalcosh.org](http://www.nationalcosh.org)

**COSH**

## Detainees are Not Criminals

Immigrant detainees are generally paid at a rate exceedingly lower than even prisoners incarcerated in the United States today. Pay to those incarcerated in the U.S. varies tremendously by state ranging from \$0.03 per hour to \$0.97 an hour for work within a

<sup>53</sup> “Dirty Dozen: Dangerous and Reckless Employers Risking the Lives of Workers and Communities,” NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (NATIONAL COSH) (2025), <https://nationalcosh.org/dd25>

prison or jail.<sup>54</sup> Other estimates have found those incarcerated can earn between \$0.33 cents and \$1.41 per hour working for non-facility specific positions, for commercial companies.<sup>55</sup>

The vast majority of detainees have not engaged in non-immigration related crimes. According to the most recent data (as of April 4, 2026) from the [Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse \(TRAC\)](#) at Syracuse University, which monitors federal immigration data, 70% of current detainees have no criminal records and those with criminal records are often minor, including traffic violations.<sup>56</sup> In addition, in February 2026, [just 2% of those immigrants](#) that faced deportation proceedings initiated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had non-immigration related criminal records.<sup>57</sup>

## Minimum Wage & Minimal Justice

The [federal minimum wage](#) today is \$7.25 per hour or \$58 per day for an eight-hour shift.<sup>58</sup> A detained immigrant would need to work for 58 days to earn what a minimum wage worker earns in one day or more than one year to earn the \$406 weekly paycheck of a minimum wage worker. In addition, minimum wage is as high as \$17.95 per hour in Washington, D.C. and \$17.13 per hour in Washington State. The map below shows the minimum wage rates in each state.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Matthew Saleh, Timothy McNutt and Alex Herazy, "Subminimum Wages in New York State Prisons," Center for Applied Research on Work (CAROW), CORNELL UNIVERSITY, (May 14, 2024), <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/carow/carow-policy/subminimum-wages-new-york-state-prisons>

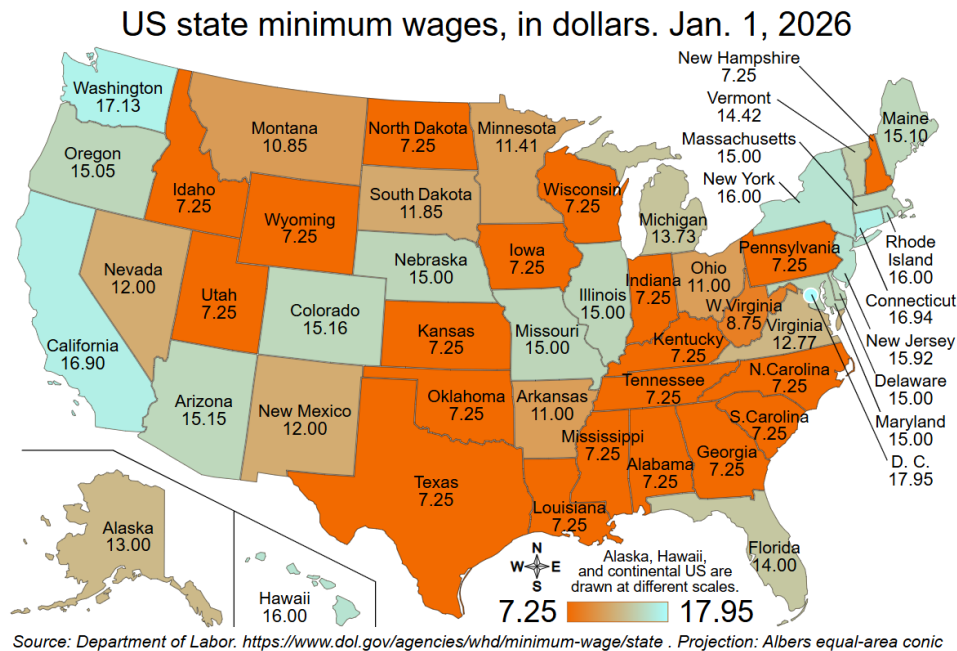
<sup>55</sup> Wendy Sawyer, "How much do incarcerated people earn in each state?" PRISON POLICY INSTITUTE (April 10, 2017), <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2017/04/10/wages/#:~:text=Incarcerated%20people%20assigned%20to%20work,the%20institutions%20that%20confine%20them.>

<sup>56</sup> "Immigration Detention Quick Facts," TRANSACTIONAL RECORDS ACCESS CLEARINGHOUSE (TRAC), Syracuse University (April 4, 2026), [https://tracreports.org/immigration/quickfacts/detention.html#detention\\_nocrim](https://tracreports.org/immigration/quickfacts/detention.html#detention_nocrim)

<sup>57</sup> "Just 2% of Immigration Court Filings Based on Alleged Criminal Activity in February 2026," TRANSACTIONAL RECORDS ACCESS CLEARINGHOUSE, Syracuse University (April 7, 2026), <https://tracreports.org/reports/771/>

<sup>58</sup> "State Minimum Wage Laws," Wage and Hour Division, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/minimum-wage/state>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



## Workers vs. Volunteers

Historically, U.S. courts have not considered immigrant detainees “workers” under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.<sup>60</sup> However, more recent cases have found that detainees are due state minimum wage for work they perform in immigration detention centers. These cases are currently winding their way through the courts. Some of these cases have been appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, some are in the discovery phase, and some cases are on their way to jury trials, which have not yet begun.

Many of the detainee lawsuits have claimed “[unjust enrichment](#)” on the part of the contractors running the detention facilities. Unjust enrichment is the “principle that a party cannot induce, accept, or encourage another to furnish or render something of value to such party and avoid payment for the value received,” according to Georgia State law.<sup>61</sup> Most legal definitions are similar. In the context of immigrant detainees, “unjust enrichment” suggests that the contractor at the facility that utilizes the services of immigrant detainees for just \$1 per day obtained these services for an unjust amount of compensation. In addition, the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals found in January 2025 that there is nothing prohibiting GEO Group from paying detainees minimum wage and that

<sup>60</sup> Fair Labor Standards Act of 1936, As Amended, U.S. HOUR AND WAGE DIVISION, Department of Labor,

<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/FairLaborStandAct.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Nilson Barahona, et. al., v. LaSalle Management Company, et. al., ORDER, U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA, VALDOSTA DIVISION, (March 31, 2025),

[https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCOURTS-gamd-7\\_23-cv-00024/pdf/USCOURTS-gamd-7\\_23-cv-00024-5.pdf](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCOURTS-gamd-7_23-cv-00024/pdf/USCOURTS-gamd-7_23-cv-00024-5.pdf)

their contract with ICE requires them to abide by both federal, state and local law, which would mandate paying minimum wage to immigrant detainees.<sup>62</sup>

Some of the ongoing lawsuits have also alleged forced labor, and even “[slavery](#),” under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA).<sup>63</sup> Dalila Yeend, a former immigrant detainee in the Buffalo Federal Detention Facility in New York, said this work and the pay “is bordering on slavery.”<sup>64</sup> One case was settled in 2023, another found that the TVPA did not apply to the Voluntary Work Program (VWP) detainees, and seven other cases in five states are ongoing.

A chart of the lawsuits regarding \$1 a day wages to immigrant detainees can be found below. The average population is based on data from the Vera Institute of Justice.<sup>65</sup>

### Court Cases Challenging the \$1 Per Day “Voluntary Work Program”

FACILITY NAME	LOCATION	AVG. POPULATION	OPERATOR
Northwest ICE Processing Center (formerly Northwest Detention Center)	Tacoma, WA	1,017	GEO Group
<a href="#">Washington v. GEO Group &amp; Nwauzor v. GEO Group</a> The Washington Attorney General filed suit in 2017 against the GEO Group for violation of the state’s minimum wage law. In 2021 a federal jury awarded \$17.3M to 10,000+ detainees and \$5.9M to the state for “unjust enrichment” by GEO Group — a combined \$23.2M judgment. In January 2025, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the case, and in August 2025 it denied a GEO Group request for a rehearing. On January 9, 2026, GEO Group filed its appeal or Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court. <sup>66</sup>			
Aurora Detention Facility	Aurora, CO	~1,000	GEO Group
<a href="#">Menocal v. GEO Group</a>			

<sup>62</sup> “Nwauzor v. GEO Group Inc.,” UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS, NINTH CIRCUIT, United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, No. 21-36024, No. 21-36025 (January 16, 2025), <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-9th-circuit/116874882.html>

<sup>63</sup> Human Trafficking: Key Legislation, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/key-legislation>

<sup>64</sup> Massarah Mikati, “‘Borders on slavery’: Suit claims labor violations at Batavia immigration facility,” OLEAN TIMES HERALD (September 4, 2020), <https://www.oleantimesherald.com/2020/09/04/borders-on-slavery-suit-claims-labor-violations-at-batavia-immigration-facility/>

<sup>65</sup> “ICE Detention Trends,” VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE (Updated April 2, 2026), <https://www.vera.org/ice-detention-trends>

<sup>66</sup> Ugochukwu Nwauzor v. The GEO Group, Inc. (21-36024), Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, COURT LISTENER, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/65407093/ugochukwu-nwauzor-v-the-geo-group-inc/>

FACILITY NAME	LOCATION	AVG. POPULATION	OPERATOR
<p>A class action suit was filed in 2014 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) alleging forced labor and “unjust enrichment.” On February 25, 2026, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously denied GEO Group’s request to dismiss the case based on the GEO Group’s argument that it had “sovereign immunity” in its role as a federal contractor. The case now proceeds to trial. This is the first TVPA forced labor case against an ICE contractor to reach the Supreme Court. A pretrial conference is set for June 3, 2026, and a final trial preparation conference is set for October 27, 2026.<sup>67</sup></p>			
<b>Adelanto ICE Processing Center</b>	Adelanto, CA	1,484	GEO Group
<p><b><u><a href="#">Novoa v. GEO Group &amp; Ramirez v. GEO Group</a></u></b></p>			
<p>Multiple class action suits were consolidated alleging minimum wage violations under California law and TVPA forced labor claims. The Novoa case was filed in 2017, and the Ramirez case was filed in 2018. The cases were stayed in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California pending the outcome of the GEO Group’s appeal in the Washington State case. On January 9, 2026, GEO filed a Petition for Certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court requesting they review the lower court’s decision. The 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit court case is stayed pending the disposition of GEO’s Petition for Certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>68</sup></p>			
<b>Mesa Verde ICE Processing Facility</b>	Bakersfield, CA	304	GEO Group
<p><b><u><a href="#">Gomez v. GEO Group</a></u></b></p>			
<p>This case was filed in July 2022 in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California’s Fresno Division representing nine immigrants who were detained at both the Mesa Verde and Golden State Annex ICE facilities. Detainees allege unlawful wage theft, unjust enrichment, and forced labor. They allege they were forced to perform facility maintenance for \$1/day or face disciplinary consequences, including loss of privileges. In 2022 and 2023 detainees held labor and hunger strikes protesting these conditions. Cases remain stayed pending GEO Group’s Washington State appeal which was filed with the U.S. Supreme Court on January 9, 2026.<sup>69</sup></p>			
<b>Golden State Annex</b>	McFarland, CA	529	GEO Group
<p><b><u><a href="#">Gomez v. GEO Group</a></u></b></p>			

<sup>67</sup> Menocal v. The GEO Group, Inc. (1:14-cv-02887), U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado, COURT LISTENER, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/4196461/menocal-v-the-geo-group-inc/>

<sup>68</sup> Raul Novoa v. The GEO Group, Inc. (5:17-cv-02514), U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, COURT LISTENER, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/6244853/raul-novoa-v-the-geo-group-inc/>

<sup>69</sup> Hernandez Gomez v. The GEO Group, Inc. (1:22-cv-00868), U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, COURT LISTENER, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/63593326/hernandez-gomez-v-the-geo-group-inc/>

FACILITY NAME	LOCATION	AVG. POPULATION	OPERATOR
<p>This case was filed in 2022 in conjunction with the above case regarding the Mesa Verde ICE detention facility. As indicated above, the suit alleges forced labor and wage theft due to the \$1/day payment to detainees for sanitation and maintenance work under the threat of retaliation, including solitary confinement, and loss of privileges if detainees refused to work. In addition, California’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health issued \$100,000+ in citations against GEO Group following 2022 inspections, including a “willful” violation for failure to implement COVID-19 airborne disease protocols. The case remains stayed pending GEO Group’s Washington State appeal which was filed with the U.S. Supreme Court on January 9, 2026.<sup>70</sup></p>			
<b>Stewart Detention Center</b>	Lumpkin, GA	2,079	CoreCivic
<p><b><u><a href="#">Barrientos v. CoreCivic</a></u></b></p>			
<p>Filed by the Southern Poverty Law Center in 2018 under the TVPA, alleging CoreCivic unjustly enriched itself and used coercion and threats of punishment, including solitary confinement and withholding access to basic necessities, to force detainees to work for \$1/day cleaning the facility. The case was settled in October 2023. CoreCivic did not pay monetary damages but was required to post a formal ‘Declaration of Rights’ notifying detainees of their right to refuse to participate in the Voluntary Work Program.<sup>71</sup></p>			
<b>Otay Mesa Detention Center</b>	San Diego, CA	1,130	CoreCivic
<p><b><u><a href="#">Owino v. CoreCivic</a></u></b></p>			
<p>Class action lawsuit filed in May 2017 in the U.S. District Court in the Southern District of California alleging CoreCivic’s VWP at Otay Mesa constituted forced labor under the TVPA and unjust enrichment under California law. In 2022, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the case could proceed as a class action, rejecting CoreCivic’s challenge to class certification. Discovery is ongoing.<sup>72</sup></p>			
<b>Cibola County Correctional Center</b>	Milan, NM	219	CoreCivic
<p><b><u><a href="#">Ndambi v. CoreCivic</a></u></b></p>			
<p>In November 2018, several detainees filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of Maryland in the Southern District alleging CoreCivic’s \$1/day VWP violated the TVPA. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit ruled adversely to the detainee in 2021, finding the TVPA did not apply to the VWP in this context – creating a circuit split with the 9th Circuit Court. The conflicting rulings increase the likelihood of a future Supreme Court ruling on these cases. (Although the detention facility is located in New Mexico,</p>			

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> *Barrientos v. CoreCivic, Inc.* (4:18-cv-00070), U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia, COURT LISTENER, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/6384840/barrientos-v-corecivic-inc/>

<sup>72</sup> *Owino v. CoreCivic, Inc.* (3:17-cv-01112), U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, COURT LISTENER, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/6127721/owino-v-corecivic-inc/>

FACILITY NAME	LOCATION	AVG. POPULATION	OPERATOR
CoreCivic was organized as a Maryland corporation, which is where the lawsuit was filed.) <sup>73</sup>			
<b>Irwin County Detention Center</b>	Ocilla, GA	221	LaSalle Corrections
<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#"><u>Nilson Barahona, et. al., v. LaSalle Management Company, LLC, et. al.</u></a></p> <p>In March 2023, a lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia against LaSalle by three immigrant detainees who had been held at the Irwin County Detention Center. The suit alleged the plaintiffs were forced to work for \$1 per day and that refusal to work was met with threats of solitary confinement or lockdown in a detainee’s cell, threats of criminal prosecution for disobeying an officer’s order, downgrading a detainee’s housing, revoking access to the center’s commissary, and denying access to medical care. Discovery is now proceeding and is scheduled to be completed by April 16, 2027, with a tentative November 2027 trial date.<sup>74</sup></p>			
<b>Buffalo Federal Detention Facility</b>	Batavia, NY	678	Akima Global Services, LLC
<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#"><u>Yeend, et. al. v. Akima Global Services, LLC</u></a></p> <p>Plaintiffs filed this case in September 2020 in the New York State Supreme Court in Rensselaer County alleging unjust enrichment and incarcerated labor, stating that they were not paid fair wages for their time working at the Buffalo Federal Detention Facility operated by Akima Global Services LLC. The suit alleges that the detainees were given \$1 a day in commissary credit for their labor, regardless of the number of hours they worked, and allege that this arrangement was “bordering on slavery.” The case was moved to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York and remains active. No trial date has been set yet.<sup>75</sup></p>			

## Profits & Politics

Regardless of the ultimate disposition of these lawsuits, immigration detention center contractors, particularly, GEO Group and CoreCivic, are benefitting financially from the Trump administration’s dramatic expansion of the detention camp complex. The [Project on Government Oversight \(POGO\)](#) released a report in February 2026 that looked at the

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<sup>73</sup> Ndambi v. CoreCivic, Inc. (1:18-cv-03521), U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland, COURT LISTENER, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/8218504/ndambi-v-corecivic-inc/>

<sup>74</sup> Barahona, et. al. v. LaSalle Management Company, LLC et al., U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia, JUSTIA, <https://dockets.justia.com/docket/georgia/gamdce/7:2023cv00024/128616>

<sup>75</sup> Yeend v. Akima Global Services, LLC (25-1061), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit Court, COURT LISTENER, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/71868270/yeend-v-akima-global-services-llc/>

top companies profiting from the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.<sup>76</sup> The GEO Group was listed as number two (2) and CoreCivic was listed as number five (5).

According to POGO's analysis, GEO Group received more than \$710 million in ICE contracts from January 20, 2025, through January 19, 2026.<sup>77</sup> CoreCivic received nearly \$269 million in ICE contracts during that same time-period. POGO's investigation also found that the GEO Group, its' executives and affiliated political action committees (PACs) made more than \$1.6 million in donations to Trump-aligned PACs and Trump's inauguration committee during the 2024 election cycle, while CoreCivic made more than \$806,000 in similar donations. In addition, the GEO Group spent more than \$3.6 million in lobbying expenditures last year, and CoreCivic spent slightly more, \$3.7 million, in 2025 lobbying expenditures.<sup>78</sup>

The GEO Group has tried to influence the administration in other ways. [Attorney General Pam Bondi lobbied](#), for instance, on behalf of the GEO Group in 2019 prior to her appointment as Attorney General in the Trump Administration while she was at Ballard Partners, LLC.<sup>79</sup>

The detention business has paid off well for companies such as GEO Group. Company co-founder George Zoley owns a 9-bedroom, 11-bathroom, 18,523 square foot home on more than 1-acre of land in Boca Raton, Florida, estimated to be worth more than \$22.5 million.<sup>80</sup> The house is a "one-of-a-kind trophy estate" with "refined opulence," according to Zillow. It includes an elevator, two laundry rooms, and a 4-bay garage, and 9 ½ to 23½ feet ceilings. [Zillow](#) describes the house this way:

"Embracing age-old ideals while artfully fashioned for today's world, this expansive courtyard estate sprawls stately on a double lot along Royal Palm Yacht & Country Club's championship golf course. Inspired by the majestic architecture and formal gardens of Miami's landmark Vizcaya and other world acclaimed estates, this newly built compound was created under the direction of David Easton, an award-winning New York-based architect and

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<sup>76</sup> Nick Schwellenbach, Luisa Clausen, and Aarushi Sahejpal, "ICE, Inc.: The Top Companies Profiting from Trump's Immigration Crackdown," PROJECT ON GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT (POGO) (February 17, 2026), <https://www.pogo.org/investigates/ice-inc-the-top-companies-profiting-from-trumps-immigration-crackdown>

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Jon Golinger, "Conflicted Justice: U.S. Attorney General-Nominee Pam Bondi's Problematic Corporate Lobbying Clients," PUBLIC CITIZEN (January 8, 2025), <https://www.citizen.org/article/conflicted-justice/>

<sup>80</sup> Zillow.com, [https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/1515-Fan-Palm-Rd-Boca-Raton-FL-33432/46724402\\_zpid/](https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/1515-Fan-Palm-Rd-Boca-Raton-FL-33432/46724402_zpid/)

interior designer lauded as one of America's leading classicists and one of Architectural Digest's AD 100 Designers."<sup>81</sup>

Zoley's home also includes iron gates, a statuesque formal great room, a series of terraces amid dramatic Italian formal gardens, a resort-style fountained pool with a mosaic-tiled spa under a garden pergola, a poolside cabana, and staff quarters, according to Zillow.

[Palm Beach County property records](#) indicate that the Boca Raton, Florida home is currently owned by Zoley.<sup>82</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The disparity between Zoley's wealth and the \$1 per day pay to detained immigrants is striking. The tens of thousands of immigrants detained by the U.S. government deserve better than being paid \$1 per day, and the federal contractors building an extensive network of detention camps across the country should not be making excessive profits at their expense.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Property Detail, George Zoley, PALM BEACH COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER, <https://pbcpa.gov/Property/Summary?parcelId=06434729100170160>