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[00:00:19] **Speaker 1** As Immigration and Customs Enforcement or Ice agents sweep the nation, making thousands of arrests. And what President Donald Trump promises to be the largest deportation operation in US history. Communities, including here in Wisconsin, are on edge. A state representative whose district in Milwaukee represents the largest Hispanic population in Wisconsin has introduced a bill to prevent state or local police from helping to detain people in churches, schools, hospitals and publicly owned buildings solely on the basis that they are alleged to not be legally present in the U.S.. We're joined by Democratic Representative Sylvia Ortiz Velez. And thanks very much for being here.

[00:01:04] **Speaker 2** Thank you for having me here.

[00:01:06] **Speaker 1** How on edge are people in your community in the midst of these ice sweeps?

[00:01:12] **Speaker 2** I've never seen anything like it. People are scared about whether or not they're going to come home from work and be able to pick up their kids. People are scared if they're going to be swept up in raids, even regular citizens. And the reason we're scared is because of a past history in this nation when mass deportations have happened and also because some of the directives that extreme directives that are coming out of Washington, D.C..

[00:01:39] **Speaker 1** Because there is a homeland security directive now in place that does allow immigration enforcement to find individuals without legal status in or near these sensitive areas.

[00:01:53] **Speaker 2** And that's a real big concern for several reasons. One, Wisconsin, we already have a worker shortage and we know that there's a lot of good, hardworking people in our state that we depend on to put food on our tables and the roofs over our heads. We also know that we need to fix our immigration. We have immigration reform, and that's not something we can do here at the state. So people are in it for good reason. And kids deserve to feel safe. And that's my concern. And the reason one of the reasons I wrote this bill is because these directives were coming out. We also want to protect people's civil rights against illegal searches and seizures from our government. That's very important as well. Again, nobody wants criminals in our communities. It doesn't keep us safe, but we're afraid they're going to go well beyond that and take the good, hard working people that don't pose a public threat.

[00:02:50] **Speaker 1** Would state legislation supersede things like Ice directives?

[00:02:57] **Speaker 2** Well, the way it works is they they can certainly perform their legal duties, but the state is not required to help them in that. And I think that's important to understand. As far as I know right now, there's not been any funding coming from the feds. And right now, our state is all states are possibly facing cuts from Congress. And in these uncertain times, it's not very wise for us to spend money when we legally don't have to because we don't know what we're going to have.

[00:03:30] **Speaker 1** Because your bill would also prohibit the use of state taxpayer dollars from aiding in the deportation of immigrants.

[00:03:38] **Speaker 2** Yeah, and that would only account. It only applies when there's no judicial warrant. So certainly if they have a judicial warrant, they have a criminal record. We definitely want to make sure our communities are safe. But what we're afraid of is people's rights being violated. We're afraid that they're going to take people who pose no public threat and we're afraid they're going to take U.S. citizens.

[00:04:00] **Speaker 1** And so if someone is at their place of work or on the street or in their car and they are approached by Ice agents, is it your recommendation that they ask to see a judicial warrant?

[00:04:16] **Speaker 2** Absolutely. It is the law that I know it to be for more than a couple hundred years. Everyone has the right, regardless if it's a state actor or a local county, city or federal actor to be protected against illegal searches and seizures.

[00:04:36] **Speaker 1** Meanwhile, Assembly Speaker, Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos is poised to introduce his own bill around this. Would that be the opposite of what you're calling for?

[00:04:48] **Speaker 2** Absolutely not. Because from what I know and again, I have seen the entirety of the bill, My my bill doesn't come with a fiscal note. I'm waiting to see if his does and his bill does not address the sacred places. And it doesn't protect also, it doesn't protect the state against possible violations of the equal protection clause. So one of the items that we put into the bill is to protect public government spaces. And that was great. So we can avoid violating our state constitutions. Us that we serve inhabitants. So if we do not serve everyone, it's possible we could be. There could be a constitutional issue with equal protection under the. Our laws in our state.

[00:05:31] **Speaker 1** What I understand, having not seen the bill myself, is that Speaker Ross's bill would require local law enforcement to cooperate with Ice.

[00:05:41] **Speaker 2** And I mean, I guess when it comes to, you know, judicial warrants, I understand that cooperation. But in lieu of that, I'm really here to talk for the good, hardworking people who pose no public threat and for the for the people in Wisconsin that need to have food on their tables and rooves over our heads. And and again, you know, I'm urging Congress to come up with solutions to secure our borders and solve our broken immigration system.

[00:06:12] **Speaker 1** How confusing are the enforcements for people who are in the US under all kinds of different methods, you know, like temporary protected status or awaiting an immigration hearing?

[00:06:25] **Speaker 2** Well, it's really complex because things are changing every day. Some people who felt they were pretty safe in their immigration status, people who already have a legal path, have had a legal pathway feel that that could be at jeopardy. So there's a lot of fear as well for people who are permanent residents, people who have legal statuses, TPS statuses. They're changing every day. They're being removed. People thought they were safe. So there's a lot of unknowns and things are changing all that all the time. And quite frankly, it's causing quite a bit of chaos. I think what Wisconsin needs to focus on is Wisconsin, and we need to take care of Wisconsinites. I don't believe we should allow the federal government to come in and violate our state constitution. I expect them to follow the law and not do any illegal searches and seizures. And quite frankly, it's a slippery slope. You allow them to do seizures, legal searches and seizures here. You know, where else does that go?

[00:07:22] **Speaker 1** And so literally in where you live, there are people who are not leaving their homes, not going to school.

[00:07:31] **Speaker 2** So I was at an event yesterday in my community, and there were I noticed there were a lot of people there that would normally have been there and they weren't. And it's unfortunate because people are staying at home. People are scared that they're not going to come back home. There are people who are afraid that they're going to lose their homes because, you know, we literally created a way for people to buy homes that were undocumented and they have made investments. But more importantly, we're hoping that people get prepared so that they have a way, someone to pick up their kids at school. I guess the worst story I've heard so far is a 13 year old girl citizen in my district, and she's been dealing with cancer for the last five years, since the age of eight. And both of her parents are undocumented. Her mother takes care of her every single day because she needs medical attention all the time. Her father works, and there might be a time that they're going to have to decide whether or not they leave their daughter here and she passes away without her parents or if they take her to Mexico, if she doesn't get the trip she needs. But at least they'll she'll be able to die there with her parents surrounding her.

[00:08:45] **Speaker 1** Representative Sylvia Ortiz Velez, thanks very much.

[00:08:48] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Thank you for your time and really appreciate you covering this issue in these dark times. I know that the light will guide us home and we'll be the better for it.

[00:09:01] **Speaker 1** What's it? I think we're clear. Thank you.