

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2025**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 18

**SUBJECT: STOPPING ICE IMPERSONATORS AND COUNTERFEIT GEAR SUPPLIERS
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

Over the past year, communities have witnessed an alarming escalation in raids carried out by masked, unidentified agents. A CNN investigation released in October 2025 found that incidents of fraudsters and predators impersonating Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have surged this year, more than in the past four presidential administrations combined, with reports ranging from assault and kidnapping to extortion. Fewer than half of the impersonation cases led to criminal charges, and only one resulted in federal prosecution, evidence that a significant enforcement gap is leaving communities exposed.

The results are predictable: when legitimate law enforcement blurs the line, predators step in. Earlier this year, a man posing as an ICE officer in Charleston, South Carolina, threatened a woman with deportation before sexually assaulting her. Weeks later in Brooklyn Heights, New York, another impersonator identifying himself as “Immigration” forced a woman into a stairwell, attempted rape, and robbery. In San Diego County, a San Ysidro man was indicted for impersonating an ICE agent to defraud more than 25 immigrants, charging each up to \$20,000 with fake Department of Homeland Security (DHS) documents and a counterfeit badge. These cases prove the stakes: when residents cannot distinguish between real officers and impostors, criminals are empowered to terrorize communities.

State and national leaders are sounding the alarm. On March 18, California Attorney General Rob Bonta warned of rising “fake ICE officer” scams targeting immigrant families. On August 11, the Democratic Women’s Caucus issued a statement describing ICE’s own masked, unmarked operations as tactics that cause confusion, terror, and mistrust among the public:

“All our lives, we are taught to fear masked men in unmarked vehicles. We learn we should run from such men to avoid being kidnapped, sexually assaulted, or killed. Yet, ICE is increasingly conducting raids and arrests in masks, plain-clothes, without visible identification or badges, using unmarked vehicles - tactics that cause confusion, terror, and mistrust among the public. These tactics invited perpetrators of violence against women to take advantage of the chaos by impersonating masked ICE agents in order to target and sexually assault women”

Their words reflect a deeper truth: when federal agencies abandon transparency, they open the door for predators to weaponize the same fear.

Compounding the crisis is the ease of access to counterfeit law enforcement gear. Online retailers openly sell “ICE” jackets, DHS patches, and imitation tactical vests, some ranking among the top sellers on Amazon. These products arm predators with the trappings of authority. It should not be easier to buy a fake ICE jacket online than a bottle of cough medicine at the local pharmacy. Yet that is today’s reality.

The County cannot allow this danger to go unchecked. When federal enforcement blurs the line between authority and intimidation, it falls to local governments to make sure our own spaces remain defined by transparency, safety, and trust. Today's action

First, this item directs the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to pursue enforcement and litigation against counterfeit gear suppliers. County Counsel should explore litigation, cease-and-desist orders, and partnerships with state and federal regulators to curb the sale of fake ICE jackets, counterfeit patches, and other items that enable impersonation. Just as we have held corporations accountable for other predatory practices, we must act against those selling counterfeit gear that endangers the public.

Second, this action directs the CAO to prepare and transmit a letter of support for Senate Bill 2212, the Visible Identification Standards for Immigration-Based Law Enforcement Act (VISIBLE Act) as authored by Senator Alex Padilla. The bill would require immigration officers to display clear identification and prohibit face coverings that obscure who they are during enforcement actions. These are simple, commonsense protections-because every person has the right to know who is questioning them, and every legitimate officer should have nothing to hide. By supporting the VISIBLE Act, the County affirms its commitment to transparency, accountability, and the basic trust that must exist between government and the people it serves.

Taken together, these steps protect both residents and legitimate law enforcement. Families deserve to know with certainty who is at their door or stopping them on the street. Officers deserve not to have their authority undercut by impostors in knockoff uniforms. This is about protecting women walking home at night, parents dropping their kids at school, and restaurant workers at the end of a shift. It is about defending the integrity of law enforcement and ensuring that no San Diegan is left to wonder whether the person confronting them is an officer or a predator.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHAIR TERRA LAWSON-REMER

1. Direct the CAO in consultation with County Counsel to pursue options for enforcement and litigation actions against the sale or distribution of counterfeit law enforcement gear, including coordination with state and federal partners to issue cease-and-desist orders and pursue civil or criminal penalties where appropriate. Return to the Board in closed session on an ongoing basis every 90 days with updates on their efforts, and options that the Board can elect to move forward with, through further direction.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to express the County's support for Senate Bill 2212, the Visible Identification Standards for Immigration-Based Law Enforcement Act (VISIBLE Act), consistent with Board Policy M-2.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

This action strengthens public safety for all residents, particularly those most vulnerable to intimidation and exploitation. Immigrant families, low-income workers, and people seeking assistance at County facilities are disproportionately targeted by individuals posing as federal agents. These impersonations erode trust in government, deter residents from accessing vital services, and create an environment of fear that undermines community cohesion. This item helps ensure that every person can seek help, report crimes, and engage with County government without fear of deceit or abuse. The proposal advances the County's commitment to fair and equitable treatment under the law and to maintaining County facilities as safe and trusted spaces for all.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

This action strengthens public trust and contributes to more resilient and cohesive communities. It aligns the County's broader sustainability goals by advancing governance practices that are transparent, ethical, and protective of community well-being.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with these recommendations. Funds for the actions requested are included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan based on existing staff time. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Lawson-Remer, seconded by Supervisor Montgomery Steppe, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended.

AYES: Aguirre, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe

NOES: Anderson, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed

by Andrew Potter

