



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**STATEMENT BY HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS
CHAIRMEN ON DETAINEE HEALTH CARE REPORT**
GAO Report Reveals Problems with ICE Detainee Health Care

WASHINGTON – Senator Robert Byrd and Representative David Price, chairmen of the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Homeland Security, expressed concern at the conclusions of a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released today regarding the health care provided to detainees by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). (The report can be found [here](#)).

There have been numerous media reports over the past several years about immigration detainee deaths that appear to have been preventable. These and other examples of poor detainee health services provided by ICE prompted Senator Byrd and Rep. Price to request a GAO investigation last summer. The GAO report found that ICE’s organizational structure for detainee health care is not uniform across facilities, and that ICE’s own medical standards were not adhered to at facilities the GAO reviewed. The report further revealed that ICE does not require detention facilities to keep comprehensive medical records and report data to ICE on the health care services provided to detainees.

“Any death in a detention facility is a tragedy and all steps must be taken to avoid them,” said Senator Byrd. “This report iterates the need for the Obama Administration and the Department of Homeland Security to request – and the Congress to provide – sufficient resources to ensure that all appropriate health care standards are enforced at detention facilities and that systems are put into place to appropriately track the health care that has been provided to each of the detainees.”

“ICE has an obligation to treat people held in custody fairly and humanely, and I am very troubled by the apparent failure to live up to this responsibility,” said Rep. Price. “The lack of uniformity and accountability among the various entities that deliver health care means that ICE is ill-equipped to exercise proper oversight over the care of detainees in its custody. The agency

simply must improve the health services it provides detainees, and we hope to get answers in tomorrow's hearing about how the new management at DHS plans to accomplish this task."

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security will hold a hearing focused on health services for detainees in ICE custody at 10:00 AM tomorrow, March 3, 2009. Testifying will be Jim Hayes, Director of the Office of Detention and Removal Operations, ICE; Captain Jose Rodriguez, Director of the Division of Immigrant Health Services, ICE; Alicia Puente Cackley, Director of Health Care, GAO; and Dr. Dora Schriro, Special Advisor to Secretary Napolitano on ICE and Detention and Removal.

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