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Mayor-Elect Ted Wheeler Says Portland Will be a Sanctuary City for Immigrants, Despite Donald Trump's Threats.

By Rachel Monahan

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Portland Mayor-elect Ted Wheeler is expected to announce today that this city will continue to serve as a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants threatened with deportation.

Wheeler's declaration comes in the faces of threats by U.S. President-elect Donald Trump to crack down on what are called "sanctuary cities" by withholding federal funds.

"Portland is a city that values inclusion, diversity, and has been welcoming to thousands of people from around the world who now proudly call the Rose City home," Wheeler tells WW.

"We will always see ourselves as a sanctuary city, and we will continue to be welcoming to everyone. President-Elect Donald Trump will be the president of all of America, and that requires an understanding of the values that drive Portland and other cities. These are our values."

Trump hasn't spelled out the details of his threat to withhold federal funds. It seems like likely, though, that he's regurgitating the Republican talking point on cities that resist the Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency's request to local law-enforcement to hold undocumented people in jail after an arrest so that feds can deport them.

But Multnomah County Sheriff Mike Reese, who runs local jails, is unlikely to change the department's current practice of ignoring requests from ICE to hold people for an extra two business days.

(The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.)

To change its policy would defy a U.S. District Court ruling from 2014. In that case, the judge ruled that Clackamas County had violated a woman's constitutional rights by holding her at ICE's request.

A newly reconfigured Supreme Court could reverse that ruling. In the meantime, there's not much the Republicans could do. That doesn't mean they won't try to withhold funding.

"There's reason to think that President-elect Donald Trump might do that," says Mat dos Santos, legal director at the civil-liberties group, ACLU of Oregon. "Now we also strongly believe that that would unconstitutional."

San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle all have sanctuary-city laws at the local level; Portland does not. In Oregon, it's a state law that generally forbids state and local government resources from using public resources to enforce immigration laws.

The idea behind the laws is at least in part that everyone will be safer if undocumented immigrants can go to the police with information on crimes without fearing that they or whoever they are reporting will necessarily be deported.

"Immigrants are really deeply rooted in our communities and our families particularly in the Portland metro area," says Dos Santos. "Having police help ICE carry out mass deportation will cause human suffering as families are torn apart. On a purely human emotional level, it's important."

Anti-immigrant groups are backing a ballot measure to repeal the law, while civil liberties groups see ways that the state or the city could further protect immigrants by declining to share information with the federal authorities.

Civil liberties groups say ICE seeks to deport undocumented people in cases where police charge someone for a minor crime.

"The tamale lady gets a violation because she's selling on the street corners, and suddenly she's being deported," says Dos Santos.