

Nebraska ICE facility brings more questions than answers

StaffEditorial

“Alligator Alcatraz.” The name we’ve heard all over the news recently once seemed so far away. Now, it’s in our own backyard.

On Aug. 19, Nebraska officials announced that a minimum security prison in McCook would be converted into an ICE detention center to hold immigrant detainees. This development has led to many worries for our staff, which we believe are mirrored in our communities.

From the beginning, the handling of this issue by government officials has raised questions. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen have named the facility the “Cornhusker Clink.” By slapping a clever alliteration together and broadcasting it proudly, it seems as though these leaders have

ignored the weight of this issue. It’s not the newest pizza joint on the corner. It’s a detention center. Even if the people detained there have broken the law, they deserve to be respected, not made fun of.

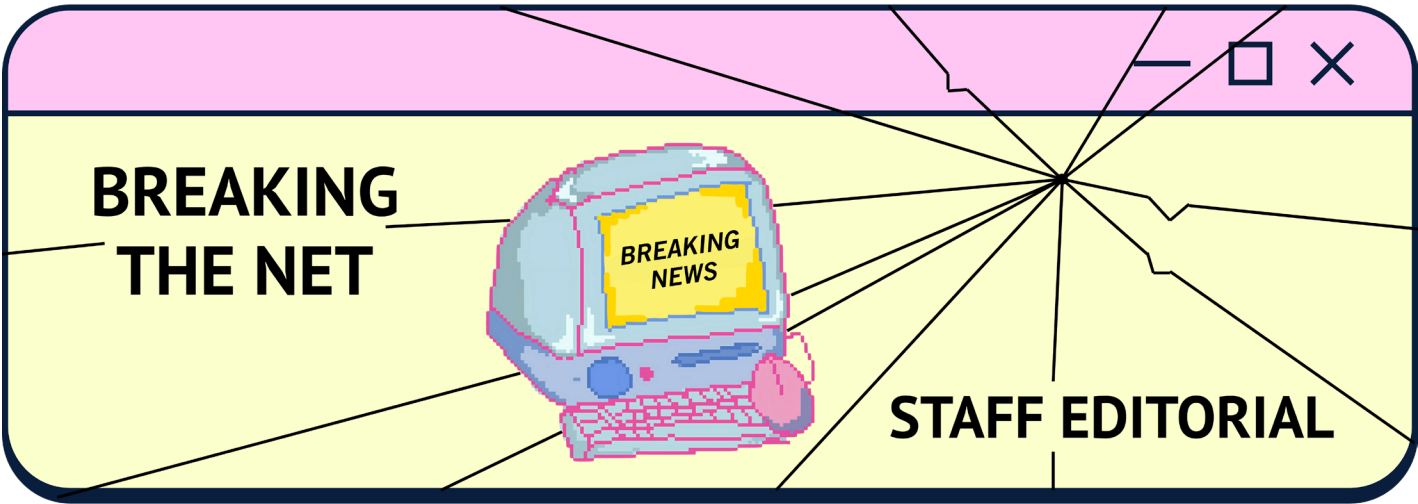
On top of this, Governor Pillen appears to be unaware of the actual purpose for the facility. When asked on Aug. 19 if children or families will be held at the facility, his response was that he “hasn’t thought about that,” and that he is “not a politician.” Throughout his 2022 election campaign, it was apparent that Pillen was running for governor—as a politician. So why, when it comes to this specific issue, does Pillen get to take the back seat and tell people that he is “not a politician”? All things considered, the underprepared and unserious manner in which Nebraska’s elected officials are

handling this situation is concerning. The lack of honest and dependable authority figures leaves many questions unanswered.

What happens to the people who are currently incarcerated at McCook? The prison is advertised as a “work ethic camp” to help prisoners prepare to rejoin their community when they are released. According to the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, the facility uses “evidence-based practices with treatment and educational opportunities” to reduce the risk of prisoners being reincarcerated. The services provided by the McCook Work Ethic Camp are far from disposable. By shutting this down, the government is effectively denying people their due opportunity for a second chance.

As students at a Catholic school, we are called to live according to the values of Catholic Social Teaching. A pillar of Catholic Social Teaching is Solidarity. This compels Catholics to identify groups that are struggling and stand with them. In order to fulfill this calling, Catholics must understand and recognize the issues that come with the arrival of this detention center in Nebraska.

Although most high school students cannot vote, it is imperative that they are aware of changes happening in their state. The decisions that politicians are making today are shaping the state they will have a career in, raise a family in, and retire in. Changes in Nebraska such as this one will negatively affect the future of our state.



Graphic by AlainaKroll

ICE has deported nearly 200,000 people (as of late August) since President Trump has returned to office.

As reported by Priscilla Alvarez of CNN Politics on Aug. 28, 2025.

Around 140,000 immigrants live in Nebraska and make up over \$40 million in tax revenue each year.

As reported by the American Civil Liberties Union of Nebraska on aclunebraska.org.

Nebraska Appleseed submitted a petition with over 18,000 signatures from across the state opposing the proposed facility.

As stated by State Sen. Terrell McKinney in letter to Chairwoman Carolyn Bosn on Sept. 19