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POLITICS

# Blind protester dragged, detained by feds says agents picked ‘the weakest person they could find’

Updated: Oct. 21, 2025, 9:37 a.m. | Published: Oct. 21, 2025, 5:30 a.m.



Federal agents detain and drag Quinn Haberl, who is 4-foot-6 and legally blind, outside the Portland ICE facility on Saturday, October 18, 2025. Dave Killen/Special to the Oregonian



By [Shane Dixon Kavanaugh](#) | [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

Quinn Haberl believes his disability and diminutive stature are precisely why six federal agents descended upon him during a protest outside the U.S. Immigration and Customs and Enforcement facility in South Portland last weekend and dragged him into the building.

“I think they wanted to make a point,” said Haberl, who is 4-foot-6 and legally blind. “So they picked the weakest person they could find and made a big show out of it.”

Haberl’s detention Saturday, captured in jarring photographs and video footage, is among the latest instances of federal law enforcement officers employing aggressive tactics against Portland demonstrators who don’t appear to present a clear physical threat.



“What happened to me is not OK,” Quinn Haberl told The Oregonian/OregonLive in an interview Monday. “What’s happening to others is not OK.” Dave Killen/Special to the Oregonian



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It was also the second time in a single week that federal officers used physical force against Haberl while he was seated by himself on the sidewalk near the driveway of the ICE facility, a frequent flash point in the monthslong clash over President Donald Trump's immigration policies.

Still, the 36-year-old said he was undeterred and would soon return.

"What happened to me is not OK," he told The Oregonian/OregonLive in an interview Monday. "What's happening to others is not OK."

An ICE spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment Monday.

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Haberl, who was born with congenital glaucoma, said he began showing up to protest at the ICE building about two-and-a-half weeks ago. He said he takes the Portland Streetcar most evenings from his downtown home to the South Waterfront neighborhood.

“I have friends that have been stopped outside, harassed by ICE, ordered to show their proof of citizenship just because of the color of their skin,” said Haberl, who moved with his wife to Portland from Minneapolis about a year ago to work for an Oregon nonprofit. “I’m not against immigration reform. What I’m against is deporting people from this country because their only, quote, ‘crime’ is being here. That’s awful. I think it’s wrong. I think it’s a waste of money.”



A DJ plays music as protests continue outside the ICE facility in South Portland on Oct. 16, 2025. Samantha Swindler/ The Oregonian

Further fueling his motivation to take to the streets is Haberl’s own personal experience.

“As a minority myself and as somebody who is disabled, I’ve lived my life feeling like the system doesn’t care about me,” he said. “This administration, with the things they’ve said, the things they do, just reinforces that.”

Equipped with a green safety vest, white mobility cane and powder blue teddy bear, Haberl said he prefers arriving to protest at the ICE facility around 6 or 7 p.m. most evenings because that’s when the music and merriment usually begins.

“To be totally honest, my favorite song to dance to thus far has been ‘Baby Shark’,” he said.

He's often been among the small group of demonstrators who take up space along the sidewalk leading to the ICE building's driveway, careful not to cross a strip of blue paint that marks the beginning of the property.



Protestors gather at Portland's ICE facility on Saturday, October 18, 2025. Dave Killen/Special to the Oregonian

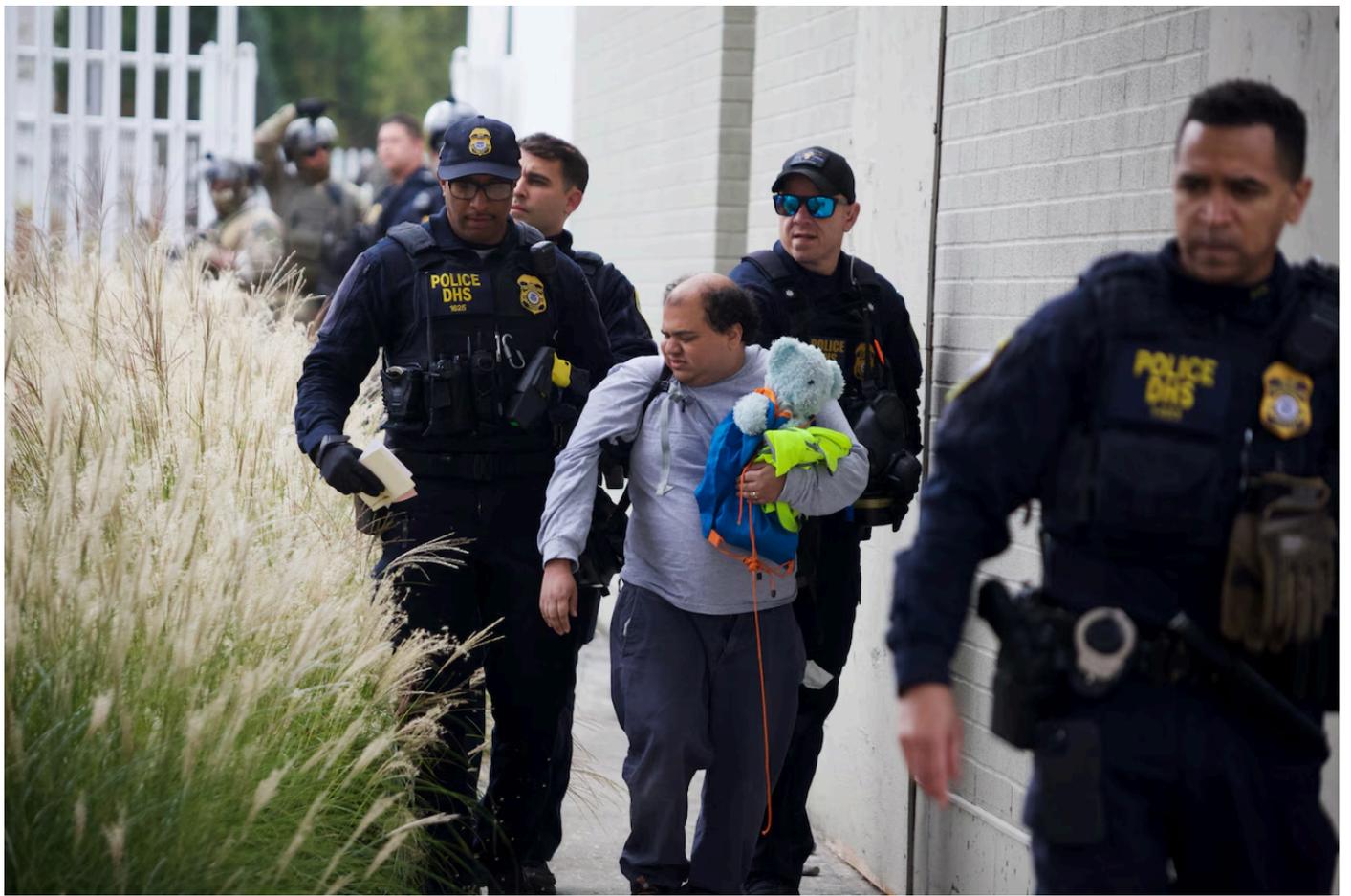
Last Tuesday night, in what he described as a mild act of civil disobedience, Haberl said he decided to remain seated along the line even as federal agents came out of the building to clear the driveway of people. They typically do this before vehicles enter or exit.

"I was going to hold my ground. I was not going to fight them," he recalled thinking.

Soon after, video shows, a pair of federal agents yanked up Haberl, walked several feet along the sidewalk and then dropped him on the concrete as people shouted that the man they had carried off was blind.

"They just threw me to the ground," Haberl said. "I almost hit my head on a cement wall."

That didn't stop him from taking up a spot along the blue line Saturday. This time, according to Haberl and video footage, he scooted off to the side of the driveway before agents emerged.



Quinn Haberl was in custody for about 75 minutes Saturday after six federal agents detained and dragged him during a protest outside the ICE facility in South Portland.

A half dozen of the federal officers then turned his way.

“That’s when they grabbed me,” he said.

Video and photos show the agents dragging and carrying Haberl back up the driveway and into the ICE facility as he bucked and flailed.

“I remember screaming for somebody to help me,” he said. “I thought I was going to die.”

Haberl said he was detained for about 75 minutes. During that time, he said he learned little about why but was eventually told he was being accused of failure to comply with federal police.

“They never yelled at me to move off the blue line. I moved off when somebody said they were coming out,” he said. “My hands were at my sides. My feet were in front of me.”

Eventually, Haberl said he was released and escorted back outside.

“I was crying. I think a lot of it was shock,” he said. “People kept coming up to me and saying I was brave. They were like, ‘You’re a hero.’ I don’t feel like I did anything.”



Protesters gathered at Portland ICE facility on Saturday, Oct. 18, 2025. Dave Killen/Special to the Oregonian

Haberl later went to the hospital where he was treated for contusions on his shoulders, hands and arms, he said. While his physical injuries were relatively minor, he said that he needs another week or so before he'll be ready to return to the protests.

"I still need to heal emotionally," Haberl said. "But I'm going back because I have to go back."

### Shane Dixon Kavanaugh

Shane Dixon Kavanaugh covers Portland City Hall for The Oregonian/OregonLive and previously wrote about crime and criminal justice issues for the paper. His political and investigative reporting has won... more

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