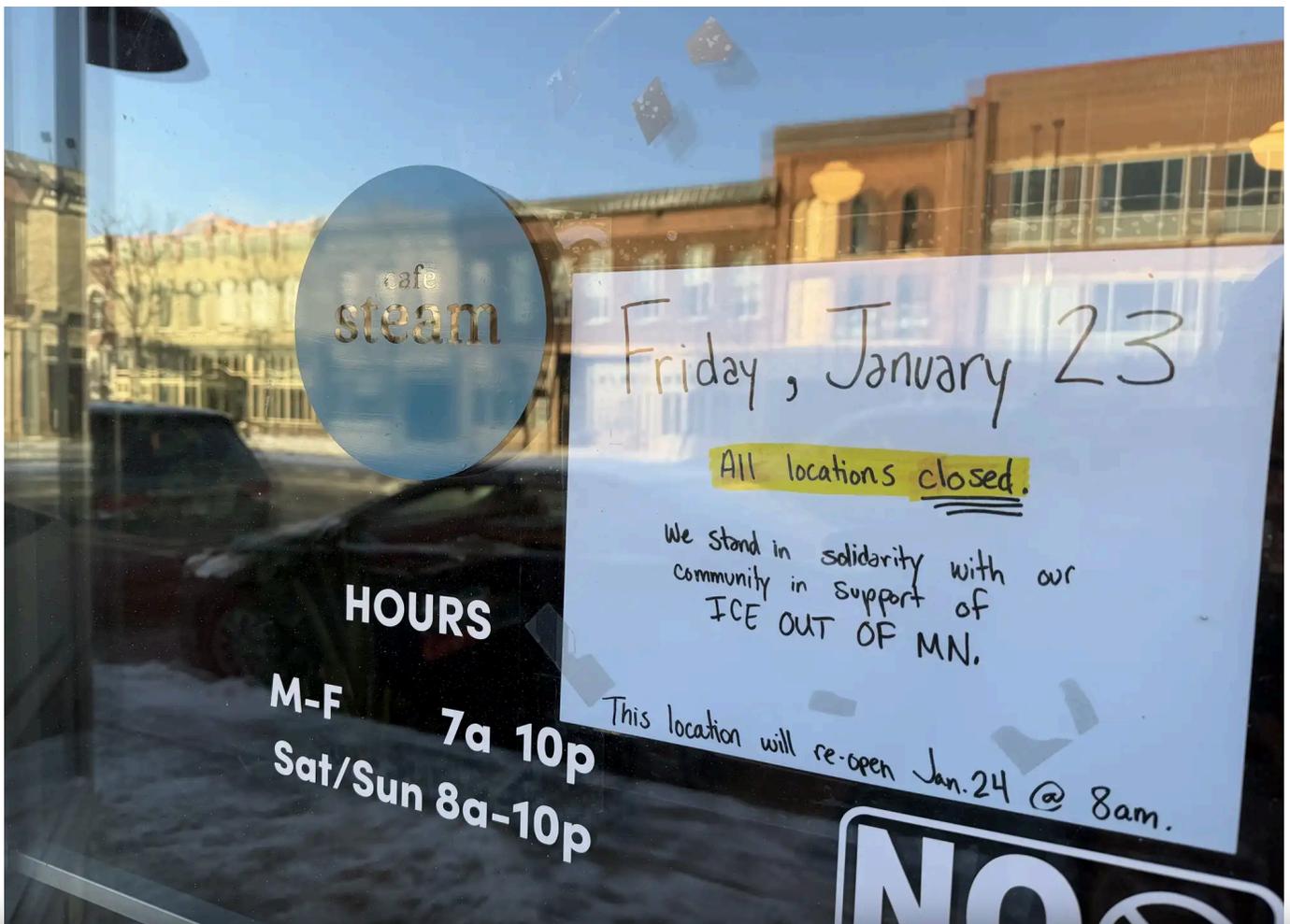


NORTH SHORE BLIZZARD Parts of north, central and western Minnesota being hit by winter storm

Immigration enforcement in Minnesota

Kirsti Marohn · January 23, 2026 4:00 AM

Across Minnesota, many businesses closed Friday to protest ICE action



ON AIR
AS IT HAPPENS WITH CHRIS HOWDEN

Listen Across Minnesota, many businesses are closed Friday to protest ICE action

Save 

SHARE

A growing number of businesses across Minnesota plan to close Friday to protest the surge of federal immigration enforcement action in the state.

Minnesota labor unions, community activists and faith leaders are organizing the economic blackout, dubbed "ICE Out of Minnesota: Day of Truth and Freedom."

They're asking Minnesota residents to avoid school, work and shopping on Friday to show opposition to the continued presence of immigration agents in the Twin Cities and elsewhere in the state.

▼ [The latest on ICE in Minnesota](#)

"It is time to suspend the normal order of business to demand immediate cessation of ICE actions in (Minnesota), accountability for federal agents who have caused loss of life and abuse to Minnesota residents and call for Congress to immediately intervene," a statement on the event website read.

Participants in the blackout include the coffee shop Caffetto and the ice cream shop Bebe Zito, which sit adjacent to each other in the Lowry Hill East neighborhood in Minneapolis.

Jeremy, a Bebe Zito manager who asked that MPR News not use his last name, said he hopes taking part in the Ice Out day will mobilize people.



ON AIR
AS IT HAPPENS WITH CHRIS HOWDEN



Jeremy, one of the store managers at the ice cream shop Bebe Zito in Minneapolis, says the shop will be closed on Jan. 23 for the "ICE Out of Minnesota: Day of Truth and Freedom" protest. Tony Xiao | MPR News

"The occupation that is happening in Minneapolis has been damaging a lot of people, including small businesses. And, you know, we want to stand in solidarity with everyone around the neighborhood," he said.

Labor unions are also calling for a general strike to voice their dissent by not going to work on Friday, if they can do so without a breach of contract.

Those who do have to work can avoid grocery shopping, dining out or going to a movie, said Mark Froemke, president of the Red River Valley AFL-CIO and the West Area Labor Council in northwest Minnesota.

"You can still be with us spiritually," Froemke said. "There's lots of ways that you can support this action."

ON AIR
AS IT HAPPENS WITH CHRIS HOWDEN

Still, some question whether a protest movement that aims to shut down Minnesota's economy makes sense — and whether it will have any impact or be mostly performative.

In a column in Twin Cities Business magazine, editor Adam Platt wrote that the list of businesses closing includes mostly retailers and restaurants — businesses that are already suffering the most under ICE operations.

“To me, the worst of the downsides is that there is a subset of businesses that are closing that employ immigrant workers, and those people will be without a wage for the day,” Platt said.

He said restaurants, theaters and music venues in downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul are already seeing slower than normal business in January, “so those places are already just hanging on.”



Caffetto and Bebe Zito in Minneapolis will both be closed Friday as a sign of solidarity with immigrants

ON AIR
AS IT HAPPENS WITH CHRIS HOWDEN

"They're facing the prospect of either closing and having no income on what is one of their busiest days of the week or sort of being externally denounced in the community as being a traitor to a larger cause," Platt said.

Some Minnesota businesses are choosing to stay open so employees won't lose pay, but they are donating some or all of their profits to organizations helping people affected by the ongoing ICE enforcement action.

That includes Dog Days, a pet daycare and boarding business in St. Paul. In an email to customers, owner Wendy Harter said they will donate 100 percent of profits from Friday to The Bond Between, a local nonprofit providing pet food and supplies to families in need.

"This approach allows us to continue caring for dogs, supporting our staff and contributing meaningfully to the broader community — all at the same time," Harter wrote.

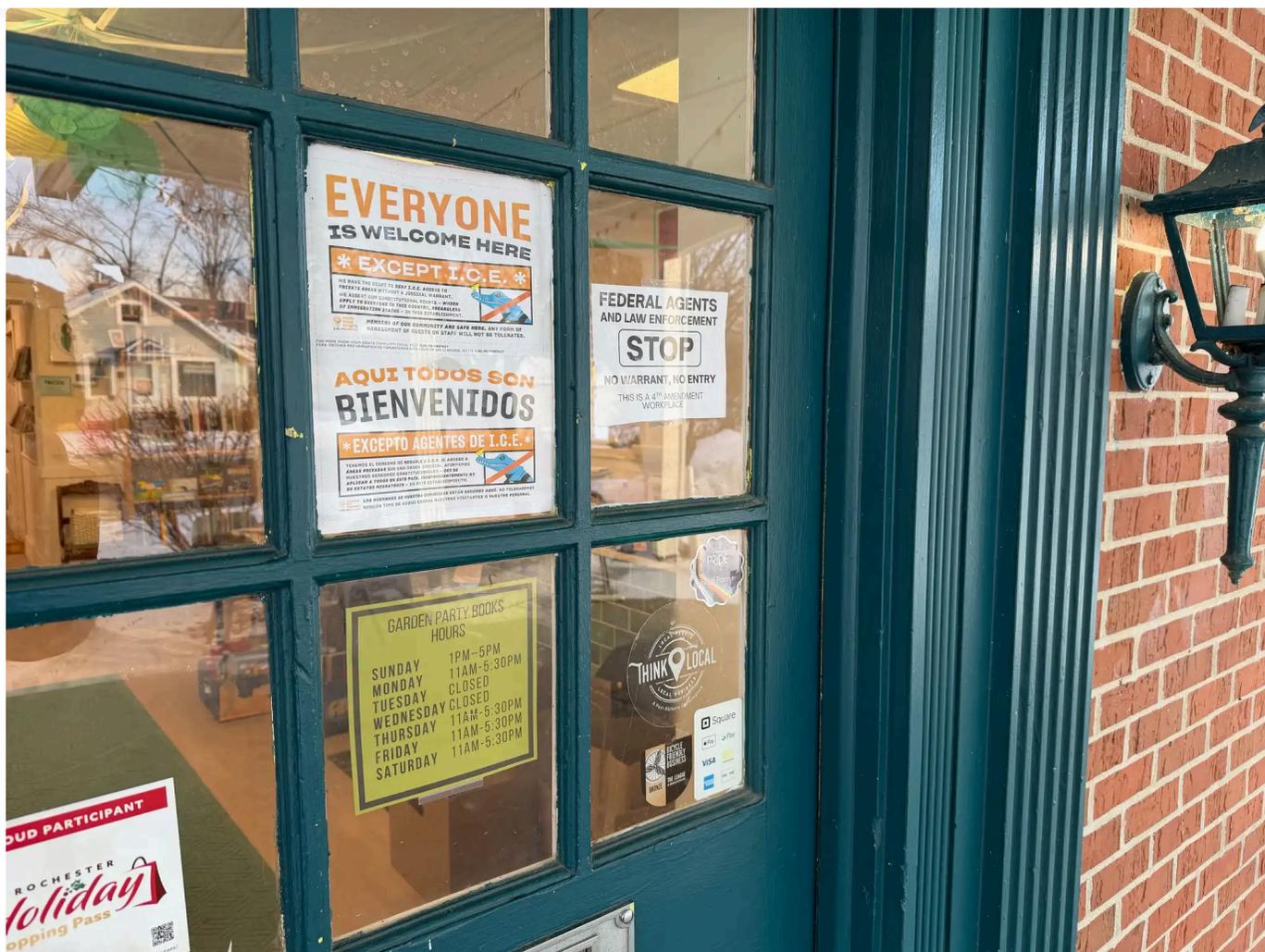
Greater Minnesota participation

ICE activity hasn't been limited to just the Twin Cities metro. Businesses in greater Minnesota are also joining the economic blackout to protest the presence of federal immigration agents in other parts of the state.

Anna Smith, owner of Garden Party Books in Rochester, said she plans to keep her bookstore's doors closed on Friday to send a message that what ICE agents are doing "is completely wrong and unacceptable, and we need to get them out of our state."



ON AIR
AS IT HAPPENS WITH CHRIS HOWDEN



Garden Party Books, a bookstore in Rochester, Minn, is closing Friday for the ICE Out protest. Molly Castle Work | MPR News

“We’re saying we are not doing business as usual,” Smith said. “So many of our neighbors are immigrant neighbors who have businesses — they can’t come to work right now because they’re scared. So for me to say, ‘Oh, but I can keep doing business,’ just feels so wrong.”

Natasha Frost, owner of the Wooden Spoon bakery and catering business in Mankato, said she’s been hearing from customers who are afraid to go out, so closing the bakery on Friday made sense.

“We pretty quickly came to the conclusion that we would stand in solidarity with the neighbors who are immigrants, indigenous, Black and people of color,” Frost said.

Business owners who’ve announced they will participate in the shutdown have

ON AIR
AS IT HAPPENS WITH CHRIS HOWDEN

Arroy, a Thai and Filipino restaurant in downtown St. Cloud, posted on Facebook that it would be closed Friday and reopen on Saturday. The restaurant's regular customers have been supportive, said co-owner Annie Meyer.



An ICE Out pin donned by Molly Larsen at the Wooden Spoon in Mankato, Minn. on Thursday. Hannah Yang | MPR News

"It's just something that we personally stand for," she said. "All of our staff is like-minded, and we just want to stand in solidarity with everybody — with our staff, family, customers and the community."

Meyer said there's also been some pushback and negativity — "and they're being very loud about it," she said. But those aren't the type of customers the restaurant wants anyway, Meyer said.

"I think people who are against this are against diversity, they're against immigrant workers and immigrant families, and that is everything we stand for," she said. "We are serving cultural food, and if you're against that, you shouldn't be eating it."

ON AIR
AS IT HAPPENS WITH CHRIS HOWDEN



Molly Larsen dons an "ICE Out" pin while working at the Wooden Spoon in Mankato, Minn. on Thursday. The business is joining hundreds of others in a statewide economic blackout on Jan. 23 to protest against the presence of federal immigration agents in the state. It's also meant to show solidarity with immigrant, BIPOC and other vulnerable communities affected by immigration enforcement. Hannah Yang | MPR News

Cafe Steam, a chain of coffee shops in Rochester, plans to pay their staff for missed work hours on Friday when they're closed.

Owner William Forsman said employees count on the income from their scheduled shifts, and the business didn't want them to "feel like they've had the rug pulled out from under them."

"Even though all of our staff are in support of this movement, they may be somewhat on the fence about losing hours that they were anticipating," Forsman said.

MPR News reporters Tadeo Ruiz Sandoval, Hannah Yang, Feven Gerezgiher and Molly Castle Work contributed to this report.

▼ [When immigration policy hits home: A Minneapolis pastor reflects](#)

▼ [Minneapolis City Council votes on \\$7 million for small business support](#)

ON AIR
AS IT HAPPENS WITH CHRIS HOWDEN