

Immigration Policy Brief

What's
Happening and
Why It Matters



904WARD

About 904WARD

904WARD began in 2015 with a small group of friends who came together to talk openly, challenge each other, support each other, and take action together to build a more inclusive Jacksonville.

We are a diverse group made up of people committed to creating a community of inclusion for all. We take pride in mobilizing thousands of volunteers every year to create racial healing and equity.

An inclusive community begins with understanding each other better.



Mission: 904WARD creates racial healing and equity through deep conversations and learning, trusting relationships, and collective action.

Vision: An end to racism in Jacksonville and beyond so all people thrive.

Florida Immigration Policy

Immigration: What's Changed at the Federal Level

Recent federal immigration measures represent a substantial expansion of executive authority in the areas of border security, removals, and migration enforcement.

Executive Order 14159: ("Protecting the American People Against Invasion") characterizes unauthorized immigration as a national emergency and authorizes an enhanced federal response, including potential military involvement.

Proclamation 10886: Similarly designates conditions at the southern border as an "invasion," a legal framing that may implicate constitutional and statutory authorities related to national defense and emergency powers.

Revisions to vetting procedures and admissibility standards: have increased screening requirements and associated costs for certain visa applicants, raising administrative law, and access-to-entry considerations.

Executive Order 14161: expands the use of expedited removal procedures, permitting deportations in specified circumstances without a hearing before an immigration judge. Order 14161 also imposes full entry restrictions on foreign nationals from 12 countries and partial restrictions on seven additional countries, many located in Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. These restrictions may invite analysis under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), and relevant equal protection principles.

Removal of Sensitive Location Clause: Prior executive guidance limiting immigration enforcement in "sensitive locations," including schools, hospitals, courthouses, and houses of worship, has been rescinded. As a result, enforcement actions may now occur in these settings, raising potential constitutional and public policy considerations.

Sanctuary City Funding Changes: The Trump Administration has taken steps to condition or withhold certain federal funds from sanctuary jurisdictions and has directed the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate jurisdictions that limit cooperation with federal immigration enforcement. These actions may implicate federalism principles and *Spending Clause* jurisprudence.

Narrowed Temporary Protected Status (TPS): designations have been narrowed or terminated for several countries. Such determinations are generally reviewed under the INA and may be subject to judicial review under the APA where plaintiffs allege arbitrary or capricious agency action.

Birthright Citizenship: Introduction of policy initiatives and legal arguments seeking to reinterpret the scope of birthright citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment raise significant constitutional questions that would likely require judicial resolution.

Immigration Enforcement Activity: Immigration enforcement activity, including workplace operations, has increased, consistently with publicly stated executive priorities to raise daily arrest targets. These enforcement actions may give rise to due process, statutory compliance, and labor law considerations depending on implementation

Local Implementation of Policies

The removal of noncitizens convicted of criminal offenses was a central component of President Trump's re-election platform. Since taking office, the Administration has elevated immigration enforcement as a primary policy priority, with a particular emphasis on arrests and removals. Immigration has also remained a highly visible and closely scrutinized issue in national media and public discourse.

The U.S. immigration system has long faced bipartisan acknowledgment of structural challenges, including backlogs, resource constraints, and inconsistencies in enforcement. While prior administrations placed comparatively greater emphasis on border management, adjudicatory reforms, and processing efficiency, the current Administration has prioritized interior enforcement operations and increased deportation activity.

At the state level, Florida provides a notable example of expanded enforcement coordination. Governor DeSantis convened a special legislative session and urged lawmakers to appropriate additional funding to support state and local law enforcement agencies in detaining undocumented individuals pending federal immigration proceedings. Subsequent legislative and budgetary actions have resulted in enhanced state-level participation in immigration enforcement efforts, raising questions related to federal-state cooperation, preemption, and the scope of delegated authority under federal immigration law.

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Florida looks to be the state-level leader in assisting the Trump Administration's mass deportation plans.”

---Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida



Immigration: What's Changed in Florida

Recent federal immigration measures represent a substantial expansion of executive authority in the areas of border security, removals, and mmigration enforcement.

Florida SB 1718 (2023) requires hospitals to collect immigration status information from patients and mandates the use of E-Verify for certain employers.

Passage HB 429 and SB 536 (2026) while these bills are primarily criminal statutes at the state level, they have direct implications for immigration enforcement because federal immigration law links certain criminal activity, including gang affiliation, to deportation and inadmissibility. These revisions increase the scope of individuals who may be subject to detention or removal proceedings based on alleged gang associations, raising considerations regarding evidentiary standards, due process protections, and statutory interpretation under federal immigration law.

New Immigration Detention Facilities: Two immigration facilities, informally referred to as "Alligator Alcatraz" in the Everglades and the "Deportation Depot" near Jacksonville have been rapidly constructed to expand detention capacity for individuals awaiting immigration proceedings or removal. The development of these facilities reflects an operational emphasis on increased detention and enforcement capacity. Their establishment may implicate federal and state contracting authority, detention standards compliance, environmental and land-use review requirements, and constitutional considerations related to conditions of confinement.

What 287(g) Is and How It Works

In addition to the above legal changes there have been clear expansions to the use of the 287(g) agreements that have shifted how Florida law enforcement and officials are working with ICE. Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act authorizes ICE to delegate specific immigration officer functions to specially trained state and local officers under a written Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with federal supervision. There are three main kinds of 287(g) agreements: Warrant Service Officer model, Jail Enforcement model, and the Task Force model.

The differences are that the "Warrant Service Officer" model only gives limited powers to the local agency. The "Jail Enforcement Model" gives more immigration enforcement powers to the local law enforcement agency, but still only within the jail operations. The "Task Force" model grants the most powers and effectively gives local or state law enforcement officers most of the powers of immigration enforcement agents. ([Immigrant Legal Resource Center, 2025](#)).

How This Has Changed Practice in Florida

All three models of 287(g) agreements are being used in Florida. Additionally, whereas in other states signing an MOA remains a local choice without statewide penalties, in Florida leaders have threatened sanctions or removal of officials to compel participation, though participation is legally not required ([Florida Phoenix, 2025](#)).

The translation of this means that all Florida law enforcement officials are now authorized as "de facto" ICE agents through the [287\(g\) program](#) with expanded capabilities. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) can hire special agents to investigate, arrest and prosecute immigration violations with the authority to carry firearms.

In addition, [over 600 local law enforcement agency partnerships: rapid increase in partnerships with ICE](#), more than any other state comprising 43% of the agreements across the nation, Additionally, 292 agencies have agreements in Florida to assist ICE.

How Does Practice In Florida Compare

Florida is the most involved state in the 287(g) program, with 100% of its 67 county sheriff's offices enrolled. For perspective, 41 states have some form of agreement with ICE. As of February 10, 2026, ICE has 34 pending 287(g) program applications. These include 3 pending Jail Enforcement Agreements, 3 pending Warrant Service Officer agreements, and 28 pending Task Force Model agreements. State law prohibits these agreements in California, Oregon, Hawaii, Washington, Illinois, Maine, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Vermont and Hawaii are the only two states where there are no pending agreements where it is not prohibited by state law ([US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2026](#))

What is the Impact in Florida

All these efforts have led to an increase in arrests. In late April 2025, ICE and Florida law enforcement arrested 1,120 people during ["Operation Tidal Wave,"](#) the largest joint immigration operation in Florida's history. Approximately 64 immigration arrests have been made per day in Florida in 2025 as compared to 20 arrests per day in 2024.

Keep Chart from Axios – on page 5 of Policy Brief: <https://wwwaxios.com/local/tampa-bay/2025/08/04/florida-noncriminal-ice-arrests-surge>

However, people without criminal charges or convictions have recently surged in Florida. In June 2025, people without criminal charges or convictions made up more than one-third (36%) of arrests in ICE's Miami Field Office region, which covers Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. That was an increase from May, which was 24%, and April, which was 21%. Nationally, people without criminal charges or convictions made up an average of 47% of daily ICE arrests in early June, up from approximately 21% in early May. This spike in non-criminal ICE arrests coincided with the administration's expressed desire to arrest at least 3,000 people a day. The Florida Highway Patrol has also launched a unit dedicated to identifying and apprehending undocumented people, according to the governor. [Source](#)

Implementations of Practice

- **Expanded Enforcement Scope:** Increased targeting of noncitizens without criminal convictions raises questions regarding the lawful limits of federal and state removal authority and potential challenges under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

- **Impact on Local Law Enforcement:** Partnerships between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities may affect traditional public safety priorities, potentially creating legal tension between community policing obligations and enforcement mandates.

- **Constitutional Considerations:** Enforcement practices may implicate constitutional protections, including due process, Fourth Amendment search and seizure rights, and the First Amendment in sensitive locations.

- **Detention Standards:** The use of detention facilities for individuals awaiting immigration proceedings may trigger compliance issues under federal detention standards and human rights norms, particularly regarding conditions of confinement.

- **Public Health and Safety:** Enforcement policies that increase detention or reduce community trust may have indirect legal implications for public health, emergency services, and statutory obligations to maintain safe and accessible public spaces.

- **Procedural Compliance:** Rapid or expanded removals may raise administrative and judicial challenges under federal law, including potential claims under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) and other legal protections governing immigration proceedings.

- **Community and Economic Implications:** Limiting participation of immigrants in local communities may have secondary legal and regulatory effects on economic development, labor compliance, and municipal services, with implications for statutory obligations under state and federal law.

Enforcement Changes in Florida (cont'd)

- **The definition of “gang-related activities” was broadened to specifically include more groups of immigrants.**
- **“Alligator Alcatraz” in the Everglades and the newly opened “Deportation Depot” outside of Jacksonville have been quickly built to house more people awaiting deportation.**

All of these efforts have led to an increase in arrests. In late April, ICE and Florida law enforcement arrested 1,120 people during “Operation Tidal Wave,” the largest joint immigration operation in Florida history. Approximately 64 immigration arrests have been made per day in Florida in 2025 as compared to 20 arrests per day in 2024.

ICE Arrests in the Miami Field Office



Source: Axios Tampa Bay; Data: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement via UC Berkeley

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Why This Matters: Seven Key Concerns

Concern #1: Non-criminals are being targeted.

- Being undocumented is a civil violation, not a crime. Yet Jacksonville city lawmakers voted 12 to 5 to make illegal immigration a local crime, requiring mandatory jail sentences of up to 60 days and local law enforcement to notify federal authorities.
- Racial profiling of Latino people is increasing as are attempts to make racial profiling legal.
- Dehumanizing terms like “illegals” and “invasion” create a framework that justifies more aggressive enforcement tactics against individuals who have committed no crimes.

Concern #2: Police-ICE partnerships undermine community safety.

When police act as deportation agents:

- Immigrants stop reporting crimes, especially crimes like robbery and sexual assault. When police are called, they often arrest and deport the victim and do not address the crime.
- Communities lose trust in law enforcement.
- Criminals target immigrants, knowing they are less likely to call the police.

This makes communities less safe and immigrants easy targets for criminal activity.

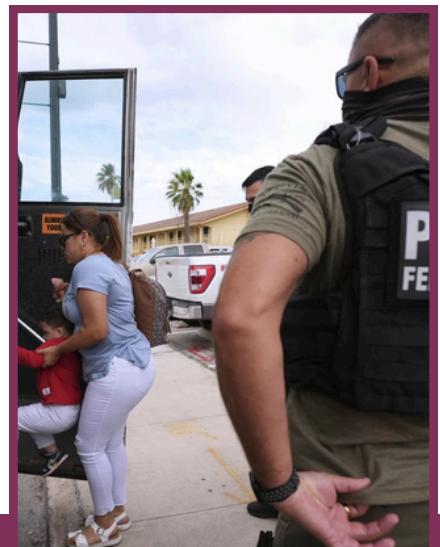
Concern #3: Constitutional rights are being violated.

- Due process is being violated when deportations occur without court hearings.
- People following the legal process are being arrested at citizenship hearings after denial.
- Detainees are being moved between facilities without legal access or family notification.
- Masked agents are making arrests without properly identifying themselves, creating easy opportunities for imposters and the inability to report misconduct.

Concern #4: Immigrants are being detained in inhumane conditions.

- Florida detention centers are severely overcrowded with inadequate food and medicine.
- Reports of worms in food, broken toilets flooding with fecal waste, mosquito infestation, and 24/7 lights have come from the Everglades detention center, a facility without permanent structures, electricity or running water.
- People can be removed from the country within 24 hours and deported to countries that are not their country of origin or conflict zones like South Sudan.

These practices represent a systematic abandonment of humanitarian standards and basic human rights protections.

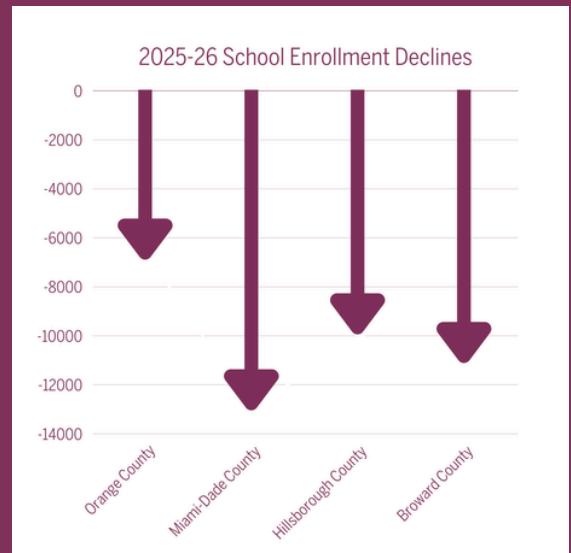


Concern #5: Public health and safety are at risk.

ICE enforcement in hospitals and schools creates dangerous ripple effects:

- Immigrants avoid medical care, allowing diseases to spread.
- School attendance is significantly down in Florida communities with high immigrant populations.
- As people avoid involving medical personnel, emergency situations become more dangerous for everyone.

When enforcement actions occur in these locations, it creates fear that undermines their ability to serve their fundamental purposes, ultimately making entire communities less safe and healthy.



Concern #6: Disregard of legal precedence creates significant legal challenges.

- Denying birthright citizenship denies a constitutional right.
- Denying citizenship to people born in the United States has the ability to create "stateless" individuals who have no country to claim.
- An estimated 1.4 million people are slated to lose their Temporary Protected Status, a status granted to people from certain countries whose personal security is potentially threatened by deporting them to their country of origin.

These changes pose serious threats to the lives of those impacted. People may be deported back to their home country, a decision administered arbitrarily without sufficient evidence or explanation of why the conditions in those countries are now deemed safe. Likewise, people without a country creates a perpetual cycle of marginalization and vulnerability with significant social, legal, and economic consequences.

Concern #7: Absence of immigrant contributions hurts our communities, society, and economy.

- The construction industry is facing a 500,000 worker shortage this year.
- Food prices are expected to rise 14.5% due to farm labor shortages.
- \$167 billion in rent revenue and \$6.6 trillion in immigrant housing wealth is at risk.
- We are also facing a loss of innovation and entrepreneurship as 46% of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children.

Most importantly, immigrants contribute to the cultural diversity, global competitiveness, innovation and social cohesion that broaden our cultural lens, push business development, and make neighborhoods more vibrant and engaging.

What You Can Do

1. Stay Informed About the Law

- Review official sources such as the **Florida Department of Law Enforcement, ICE**, and the **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** for accurate information on enforcement policies.
- Understand your rights under federal and state law, including protections for noncitizens and local community members.

2. Know Your Constitutional and Legal Rights

- Individuals can consult legal resources or **immigration attorneys** to understand rights related to detention, search and seizure, and due process.
- Local organizations often provide **“know your rights” workshops** that explain what to do during encounters with law enforcement or ICE.

3. Engage with Local Representatives

- Contact local, state, or federal officials to ask questions or provide input on policies affecting public safety, enforcement practices, and community wellbeing.
- Participate in **public hearings or town halls** to ensure policy decisions consider the full range of community impacts.

4. Support Access to Legal Resources

- Contribute to or volunteer with **nonprofit legal aid organizations** that provide representation or guidance to immigrants facing removal or detention.
- Promote awareness of **available legal pathways**, including Temporary Protected Status, asylum, or relief from removal programs.

5. Promote Community Safety and Trust

- Encourage collaboration between community leaders and law enforcement to maintain public safety while protecting civil liberties.
- Support programs that separate local policing from immigration enforcement to preserve trust and encourage reporting of crimes without fear of immigration consequences.

6. Monitor Conditions in Detention Facilities

- Stay informed about detention facility standards and advocate for compliance with **federal detention regulations** and humane treatment of individuals in custody.
- Report or document concerns through **official inspection bodies**, nonprofit monitors, or legal advocacy channels.

7. Highlight Immigrant Contributions

- Share evidence-based research or stories demonstrating the economic, social, and cultural contributions of immigrants to local communities.
- Participate in initiatives that **integrate immigrant residents into public services, education, and workforce development**, ensuring policies reflect community realities.

Final Considerations

Immigration enforcement policies can have broad effects across communities. When individuals avoid hospitals due to concerns about enforcement, public health outcomes can be affected. When people do not report crimes, overall community safety may be compromised. Labor shortages can increase costs in sectors such as construction and food production, affecting prices for all residents. Beyond individual concerns, these policies may influence economic contributions, innovation, and levels of trust within communities. Staying informed and engaging with the issue helps support the safety, health, and economic well-being of all residents.

Stay
Connected

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