AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

# Domestic Travel Information for Undocumented Immigrants

Traveling inside the United States has become riskier for undocumented immigrants. New federal policies and state laws have made it more likely that it can lead to arrest and/or detention. Domestic flights, traveling by bus or train, and even driving to nearby cities can put you in the path of immigration officials. For this reason, it is important that you speak to your immigration attorney before any travel.

## At the Airport: TSA Shares Your Data with ICE

The TSA shares domestic passenger information with ICE, which cross-references that information against records of people with final removal orders and sends agents to the airport to make arrests. ICE is already present at many airports across the United States. **This is most likely to affect you if you have a final order of removal, pending applications, or any criminal history. Do not fly without consulting your attorney first if any of these apply.**

If you decide to fly, be ready for extra screenings from TSA, CBP, or other immigration officers.

## Facial Recognition Scans: You Have the Right to Opt Out

DHS is consolidating the biometric databases of TSA, ICE, CBP, and USCIS, including facial recognition, into a single unified platform. In early 2026, TSA expanded facial recognition to 65 airports. For domestic flights, you currently have the right to opt out. Say: "I am opting out of facial recognition. I would like manual ID verification." Ask for a supervisor if the agent refuses. **Note that prior facial recognition scans taken at the time of lawful entry may remain in the system even if you opt out later.**

## Bus and Train Travel: The 100-Mile Zone

CBP has legal authority to board buses and trains within 100 miles of any U.S. border without a warrant. This area covers nearly 2/3 of the U.S. population, and includes states such as Florida, Michigan, and several states in New England, as well as vast portions of Arizona, California, Texas, New Mexico, and other states.

They may ask questions about your status, which you have the right to refuse. However, refusing to answer may result in agents asking you to step off the bus or train. Weigh this risk carefully before traveling through these zones.

## Traveling in High-Risk States

Certain states — such as Alabama, Texas, and Florida — have laws that create added risk and may result in immigration detention or arrest during a routine traffic stop. Consult your attorney before traveling through high-risk states if you have any status issues.

## Before You Travel

- Speak to your immigration attorney.
- Send a trusted person your travel plans and your attorney's phone number.
- Designate someone to care for your children if you are detained.
- Write down your attorney's phone number and memorize it — you may lose access to your phone.
- Bring physical copies of important immigration documents, including documents that show your lawful status or pending applications. Finally, be sure to secure your electronic devices before you fly.

## If You Are Stopped, Questioned, or Detained

- **Stay calm**: Do not run, argue, or physically resist.
- **Present your passport if asked:** You may show your passport as ID. You are not required to disclose your visa category.
- **Opt out of facial scan:** Say, "I am opting out of facial recognition. I want manual ID verification."
- **Remain silent:** Say, "I am exercising my right to remain silent."
- **Ask for a lawyer:** Say, "I want to speak to an attorney." Repeat if necessary.
- **Do not sign anything:** Speak with your attorney before signing any immigration form, as some forms may permanently waive your right to a hearing before an immigration judge or can result in a bar in returning to the U.S.

*This flyer is intended for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. You should not act or rely on any information in this flyer without consulting a competent, licensed immigration attorney. If you do not have an immigration attorney, you can find a licensed attorney at www.ailalawyer.com.*

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