

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2026

The Honorable David Venturella
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Dear Acting Director Venturella:

We write with serious concern regarding a recent report from the Associated Press (AP) that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) implemented a policy change to its Online Detainee Locator System (ODLS) on September 15, 2026, so that individuals with final removal orders from an immigration court no longer appear in the searchable database while they remain in ICE custody. ODLS is a public system that allows family members, legal representatives, and members of the public to locate individuals detained by ICE¹. We urge ICE to restore ODLS location information for all individuals with final removal orders who remain in ICE custody and to provide Congress with the justification underlying this change. The federal government should not be denying any individual access to legal counsel or shielding their whereabouts from loved ones.

ICE created ODLS so that family members, legal representatives, and members of the public can locate individuals in immigration custody. On September 21, 2026, AP reported that ICE began removing individuals with final orders of removal from ODLS on September 15, 2026. ICE has not publicly announced this change in policy and has not communicated to detainees' families or legal representation where detainees are currently held who have disappeared from ODLS. The Washington Post also reported that ICE's new policy¹ bars immigration officials from sharing information with their attorneys or relatives by phone, information that ICE has been providing for decades. This is a wholly unprecedented move by the United States government to impede both access and legal representation for people in federal custody. It is also contrary to foundational principles of the American legal system, where there is a general right to know where a prisoner is being held.

The consequences of this change extend beyond public transparency. Immigration attorneys have reported losing track of clients after they disappeared from ODLS, while family members are uncertain whether their loved ones were transferred to another facility or removed from the United States completely. For families, this uncertainty in suddenly losing contact with a loved one can lead to anxiety, trauma, and the continued mistrust of the federal government. Detainees may be held in facilities thousands of miles away from their homes, and while ICE maintains that detainees have access to phones while in custody, detainees are not always able to place phone calls due to the cost of the calls, high demand for phone usage, or a combination of these and other factors. Attorneys have warned that losing access to a detainee's location can interfere with communication and make time-sensitive legal challenges more difficult to pursue, especially where venue for litigation depends on knowing where someone is physically detained. Individuals with final orders of removal may still have pending legal claims or other avenues for relief, making continued access to counsel especially important.

¹U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Locating Individuals in Detention, Aug. 8, 2023, <https://www.ice.gov/factsheets/locating-individuals-in-detention>.

Individuals with final orders of removal are routinely held in ICE custody for days, weeks, or months. Some individuals with final orders cannot be rapidly deported due to difficulty obtaining travel documents, or logistical challenges. Others have been granted protection from deportation to their home country and remain detained for substantial periods of time while ICE appeals the decision or seeks a third country of removal. Under ICE's new policy, these individuals will be hidden from the public, with their lawyers and family members having no way to determine where they are being held at any time.

This unprecedented policy also substantially interferes with the oversight capacity of Members of Congress from locating constituents who have been detained by ICE and the ability of detainees' legal counsel to determine where an individual is being held.

As part of our Congressional oversight responsibilities, we request a response to the following information by October 14, 2026:

1. Immediate restoration for all individuals with final removal orders detained by ICE back into ODLS.
2. Is ICE withholding information on detainees' location from their family members and their lawyers who are calling or emailing to request this information, in addition to no longer listing the location of a detainee on the online locator system?
3. What directive, guidance, memorandum, or other instructions were ordered as part of the change to ODLS that removed detainees who are subject to final removal orders? Provide this in writing, in addition to how ICE's new policy constitutes a final order of removal.
4. What procedures has ICE established to ensure that attorneys and family members can promptly determine the location of individuals with final removal orders who remain in ICE custody, but no longer appear in ODLS?
5. Provide a list of ICE detention facility locations that are currently exempt from this policy, either due to a judicial order or for any other reason.

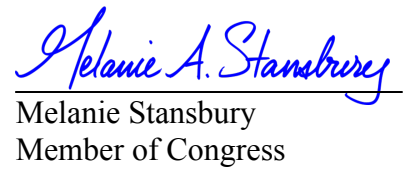
We urge ICE to rescind this policy immediately and restore ODLS location information for all individuals with final orders of removal who remain in ICE custody. ICE should ensure that detainees remain locatable to their families and legal representatives instead of trying to hide these individuals' whereabouts.

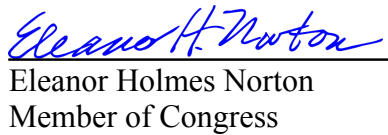
Sincerely,

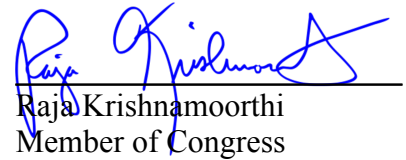

Luz M. Rivas
Member of Congress

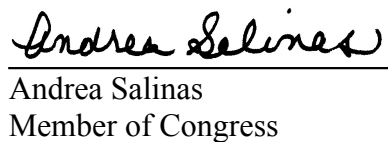

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

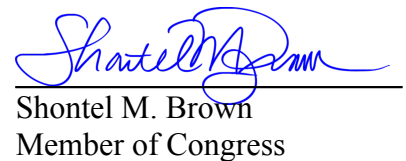

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress


Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress

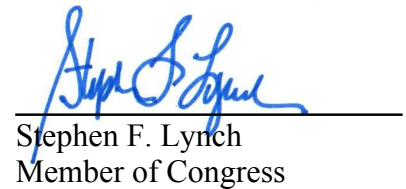

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

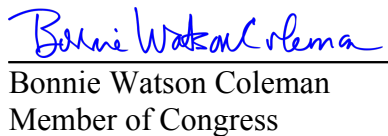

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

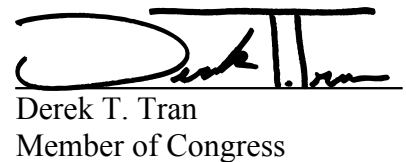

Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress

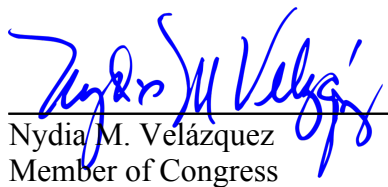

Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress

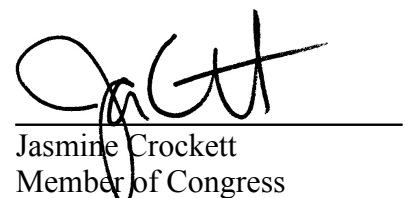

Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

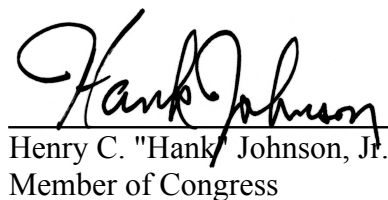

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

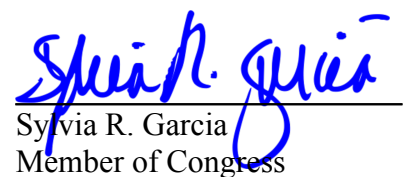

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress


Derek T. Tran
Member of Congress

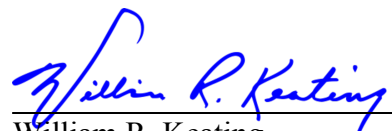

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress


Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress

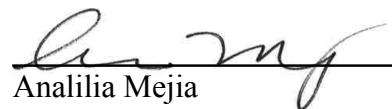

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

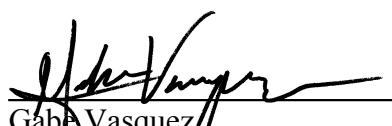

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

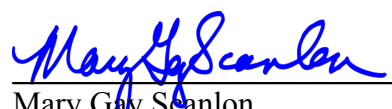

Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress

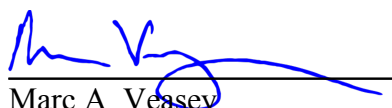

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

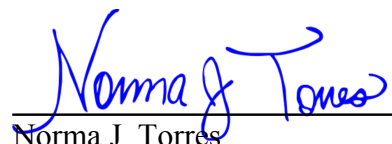

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress


Analilia Mejia
Member of Congress


Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress


Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

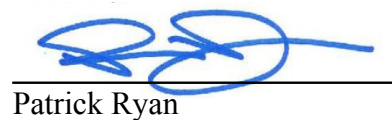

Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress

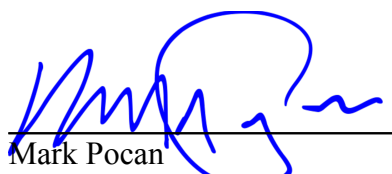

Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress


Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress


Brittany Petersen
Member of Congress


Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress


Patrick Ryan
Member of Congress


Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

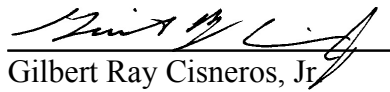

Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



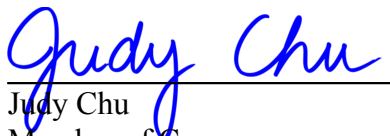
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



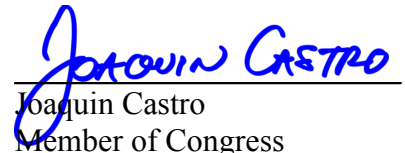
Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



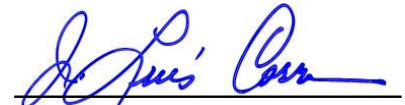
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

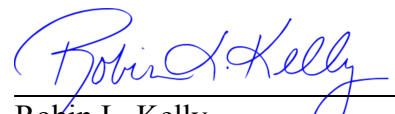


Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Robert Garcia
Member of Congress


John Garamendi
Member of Congress


Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress


Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

CC: Department of Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin