

## Under Attack by Trump, Immigrant Justice is Advancing in the States

In 2019, state and local officials got the message: Our communities must and will fight back.

**Naureen Shah**, Senior Advocacy and Policy Counsel

December 9, 2019

<https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/under-attack-by-trump-immigrant-justice-is-advancing-in-the-states/>

This year was another of devastating attacks on immigrants' rights by the Trump administration. However, in both red and blue states, we fought and won new measures that stymie Trump's deportation machine. These local wins, though often overshadowed by the president's xenophobia, are powerful. Here are some of the most surprising and significant of our 2019 immigrant justice victories in the states.

### In Michigan, a former marine's arrest prompts police reform

Grand Rapids, Michigan police kept veteran and U.S. citizen Jilmar Ramos-Gomez in immigration detention for 3 days — even though he was carrying his U.S. passport when he was arrested. The stunning case prompted a public outcry. Following advocacy by the ACLU of Michigan, the Grand Rapids Police Department issued a new policy prohibiting police stops and interrogations based solely on suspected violations of immigration law; and the Kent County Sheriff issued a new policy requiring a judicial warrant for all Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainees.



### A landmark 60 Massachusetts localities have opted out of ICE collaboration

Years into an effort to end the entanglement of state and local police collaboration with ICE, the number of Massachusetts towns and counties opting out of ICE collaboration has reached 60. The latest: In November, the rural community of Greenfield — home to many undocumented farm workers — overrode the mayor's veto to pass a Safe City ordinance. This policy stops police from asking about immigration status and prohibits giving ICE information about people in local custody. Shortly after the decisive victory, opponents tried to repeal the ordinance through a ballot initiative, but the ACLU of Massachusetts worked with a broad coalition on the ground to defeat it.

### New Jersey makes statewide advances on immigrant justice

The New Jersey Attorney General issued a major directive: New Jersey's counties can no longer participate in 287(g) agreements, which allow ICE to deputize local law enforcement as federal immigration officers. These agreements have a record of contributing to racial profiling and the harassment of immigrant communities. Additionally, the state legislature approved a 50 percent increase in funding for free legal counsel to people detained in New Jersey who face potential deportation. Finally,

the governor signed a bill severely restricting the use of solitary confinement in state prisons and county jails, including those that detain immigrants.

### **Las Vegas and Nashville sheriffs end anti-immigrant agreements**

The Las Vegas, Nevada police department withdrew from its 287(g) agreement with ICE and announced it will end its practice of honoring ICE detainers, prompted by the ACLU of Nevada and several groups. The sheriff in Nashville, Tennessee ended a rent-a-bed program that allowed ICE to use the local jail for immigration detention.

### **New York and Oregon make driver's licenses accessible to all**

Across the country, hundreds of thousands of undocumented people struggle to get to work and take their children to school because they don't have access to driver's licenses. Driving without a license can lead to their arrest, detention, and deportation. Expanding access to driver's licenses to all eligible individuals regardless of immigration status is good for public safety because it ensures more people on our roads are tested, trained, and qualified. New York passed a driver's licenses for all bill in June and Oregon did so in July. Now there are a total of 14 states making driver's licenses eligible to residents regardless of immigration status, plus D.C. and Puerto Rico.

### **Nebraska school districts agree to anti-discrimination measures**

Following an ACLU of Nebraska report on barriers to immigrant and refugee kids registering and enrolling in school, major school districts in Omaha, Norfolk, and Crete agreed to make changes. The state's Department of Education is beginning to develop new regulations in response to the report.

### **Utah, Colorado, and New York pass laws to protect non-citizens from deportation**

This spring, Utah became one of the few Republican-led states to pass a so-called 364-day law. Colorado and New York passed similar bills. These measures reduce the maximum jail sentence for misdemeanor offenses by one day, from 365 to 364 days, protecting immigrants from serious consequences imposed by federal immigration law that kick in at 365 days or more — even if the person's actual sentence is just a few days. Those consequences include detention, deportation, and loss of opportunity for individuals to adjust their immigration status. These reform measures ensure that convictions for minor offenses like shoplifting don't carry devastating consequences.

There are a lot more wins, including major reform legislation in California, Illinois, and Washington. The threat to immigrants' rights is far from over. Still, we can expect that states will continue to take action as public opinion evolves on immigrants' rights. Six in 10 Americans now oppose the Trump administration's agenda of deporting immigrants without lawful status. In 2019, state and local officials got the message: Our communities must and will fight back