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Big Victory for Immigrants & Advocates as New York State Courts Prohibit ICE from Arresting Individuals Inside Courthouses Without a Judicial Warrant

NEW YORK--Immigrants, families and advocates are celebrating a huge victory after the New York State Office of Court Administration (OCA) today announced new rules prohibiting ICE from arresting individuals in state courthouses without a judicial warrant or judicial order. Before this rule change, ICE often entered court buildings with only administrative ICE warrants and most often did not show any warrant at all. New York is the first state in the country to make this groundbreaking rule change.

Read the new rules [here](#).

The new rule comes after a two-year community campaign by the [ICE Out of Courts Coalition](#) pushing for court rules and legislation to keep ICE from laying in wait for immigrant victims, witnesses, defendants and family members in and around courthouses across New York. Just last week, the coalition renewed the call for court rules in an [80-page report](#) measuring the harmful impact of ICE's increased courthouse operations.

"This rule change is a big win for thousands of immigrants and their families across New York State who will no longer be sitting ducks in the courtroom," said **Terry Lawson, Director of the Family and Immigration Unit at Bronx Legal Services, the Bronx office of Legal Services NYC**. "We can now advise the women, men, and children we represent that ICE cannot arrest them in New York State courts without a warrant with their name on it, signed by a judge. We applaud the Office of Court Administration for taking this historic step and hope other state court systems follow suit."

While the new rule makes a huge change inside courthouses across the state, ICE agents can still wait in parking lots or stand outside court buildings to try to pick up immigrant New Yorkers as they attend or leave court. That is why advocates are urging the NY state legislature to pass [the Protect Our Courts Act](#), which would keep ICE out of the area surrounding court buildings so that they cannot prey on immigrant families interacting with the court system.

“For two years ICE has defied the calls from advocates, elected officials, and court practitioners—including judges, defenders and prosecutors—to stop using the courts to target immigrants,” said **Immigrant Defense Project Acting Executive Director Mizue Aizeki**. “Today OCA has taken a significant step towards recognizing the significant harms created by ICE’s presence in the courts. The next step is for Albany to pass the Protect Our Courts Act, to end ICE’s practice of arresting people as they are coming to and leaving court.”

Below are additional statements from ICE Out of Courts Coalition members as well as prosecutors, judges, and elected officials:

“All New Yorkers should be able to access New York State courthouses without fear or intimidation by ICE, which is why OCA’s announcement is a critical step forward for our communities” said **Natalia Aristizabal, Co-Director of Organizing at Make the Road New York**. “Our community members have seen an unprecedented increase in ICE raids at the courts, which makes us all less safe. OCA’s new rule will significantly limit this dangerous practice. The next step is for New York legislators to pass the Protect Our Courts Act so that all New Yorkers will know, once and for all, that they can access courthouses without fear of ICE.”

“No survivor should have to face the threat of deportation for holding an abuser accountable. No abuser should go free because a victim fears ICE,” said **Evangeline M. Chan, Director, Safe Horizon Immigration Law Project**. “Today’s Directive from the Office of the Chief Administrative Judge will help ensure survivors can seek and access justice.”

“This rule provides protections, and a strong statement by OCA, that immigrant New Yorkers must be able to access our courts without fearing widespread presence of immigration enforcement” said **Beth Goldman, President and Attorney-in-Charge of New York Legal Assistance Group**. “Our justice system cannot function equitably if all members of our community cannot safely appear to seek redress and justice. We commend OCA’s passing this rule and are grateful to all who advocated for these safeguards.”

“Upstate New York knows far too well the devastating impacts of ICE raids in our courts. From community members with traffic tickets to domestic violence survivors, our community is terrified to go to court,” said **Bryan MacCormack, Executive Director of the Columbia County Sanctuary Movement**. “They call Columbia County Sanctuary Movement for accompaniment because they know we our unwavering support has prevented multiple court raids from occurring. We are now calling on the NYS legislature to follow the OCA and Protect Our Courts.”

“ICE has had a chilling effect on the way our courts are meant to operate. They pit the fear of deportation against our clients' need to exercise their rights in the legal system,” said **Justine Olderman, Executive Director of Bronx Defenders**. “We applaud OCA for taking a critical first step towards safeguarding the integrity of our courts, but there’s more work to be done. To truly reverse the corrosive impact that they have had on our court system, we must pass the Protect Our Courts Act and fully expel ICE from our courthouses. As long as ICE is allowed to attend court and surveil our clients, we cannot assure them that their worst fears won’t be realized simply by attending their court hearing.”

“This new rule will truly help protect immigrant New Yorkers from the pervasive and rampant immigration enforcement at courthouses that we have seen on a regular basis since the start of the Trump administration,” said **Janet Sabel, Attorney-in-Chief of The Legal Aid Society**. “In order for our judicial system to function properly, all immigrants — including our clients who have been accused of a crime, parents appearing in family court, and survivors of abuse, among others — must have unimpeded access to courts. We laud OCA for enforcing the rule that arrests require judicial warrants, and that immigration warrants that do not meet that standard may not be executed within New York’s courts. We also laud all the dedicated advocates who have worked tirelessly to protect our immigrant clients’ right to go to court without fear of immigration authorities. We now call on New York State lawmakers to enact legislation that will effectuate permanent protections for immigrants attending court.”