

THOMSON REUTERS & RELX: STOP FUELING ICE'S DEPORTATION MACHINE

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) heavily relies on data supplied by Thomson Reuters and RELX to track and arrest immigrants on a massive scale.¹ Thomson Reuters (Westlaw's parent company) and RELX (Lexis and Reed Elsevier's parent company) are major law enforcement data brokers, selling troves of personal data to ICE; in this way, these corporations fuel ICE's surveillance program by providing the agency with the personal data it relies on for tracking, raiding, detaining, and deporting immigrants. Combined, the companies have over \$50 million worth of ICE contracts to provide "mission critical" resources to ICE.²

Thomson Reuters & RELX's ICE Contracts Threaten Privacy and Intellectual Freedom, and Violate Legal Ethics

Thomson Reuters and RELX have been moving away from traditional legal and academic publishing, restructuring their businesses on data analytics,, including online investigative software (like Thomson Reuters' CLEAR) and law enforcement risk solutions products (like LexisNexis' Accurint).

When the same companies that support ICE surveillance also control Westlaw and Lexis, the two major research products that legal professionals and researchers rely upon, it raises some major professional ethics issues, including:

- 1. Confidentiality and privacy:** Neither Westlaw nor Lexis have ensured that users' research data is and will continue to be separate from their surveillance product data. When legal research vendors sell surveillance data to law enforcement, they risk the confidentiality of the data collected by their legal research products. If surveillance is their market, what happens to data tracking Westlaw and Lexis log-ins, search histories, and document views? Client confidentiality is a cornerstone of the legal profession. Without affirming a commitment to search confidentiality, Westlaw and Lexis users cannot be sure that either product would defy their law enforcement clients' requests for legal research data.
- 2. The ethical use of information:** When legal and research professionals buy legal research services from vendors that participate in police surveillance, chances are high that the money funds surveillance research and development. Lawyers collectively pay millions of dollars for Westlaw and Lexis, giving Thomson Reuters and RELX ample overhead to build digital deportation products for ICE.

Lawyers are responsible for ensuring client confidentiality and acting in the best interests of their clients. Similarly, privacy and intellectual freedom are cornerstones of ethical research. Lawyers, including [the ABA](#), have called ICE's practices unconstitutional and unethical. It is time for legal and research professionals to demand that Thomson Reuters and RELX drop their contracts with ICE. Sign on: notechforice.com/lawletter



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¹ Sarah Lamdan explains Thomson Reuters and RELX's roles in ICE surveillance, and the implications of those relationships on lawyers' professional responsibility obligations, in her article, "When Westlaw Fuels ICE Surveillance: Legal Ethics in the Era of Big Data Policing," 43 New York University Review of Law & Social Change 255 (2019)

² The extent of ICE's reliance on these products to raid and arrest immigrants was described in a New York Times Magazine article by McKenzie Funk, "How ICE Picks Its Targets in the Surveillance Age," October 2, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/02/magazine/ice-surveillance-deportation.html>