



Office of the Mayor
City of Seattle
Bruce Harrell, Mayor

Executive Order 2025-08: Strengthening Seattle's Response to Federal Threats to Immigrant and Refugee Communities

An Executive Order to strengthen and enhance the City of Seattle's response to federal threats to our immigrant and refugee communities.

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle is proud to be a Welcoming City, affirming its steadfast commitment to serve as a supportive home for refugees and immigrants; and

WHEREAS, immigrants and refugees are foundational to the identity of our city and contribute profoundly to Seattle's growth, resilience, and cultural vibrancy; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle has a long history of supporting immigrants and refugees, as demonstrated by policies that prevent City employees, including police officers, from inquiring into immigration status and prohibit police officers from enforcing civil federal immigration laws; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle has enacted ordinances, including the Welcoming City Ordinance, that restrict City resources from being used for federal civil immigration enforcement and reaffirm the City's role as a protector of immigrant and refugee communities; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle's laws and policies are designed to promote public safety and enhance trust between immigrant and refugee communities and their local government and local law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Washington State Legislature passed the Keep Washington Working Act, prohibiting state and local law enforcement agencies from inquiring into immigration status and from providing information to federal immigration authorities for civil immigration enforcement, unless required by law; and

WHEREAS, President Trump has targeted immigrants and refugees to an unprecedented level, undermining American principles of inclusion, diversity, and support for immigrant and refugee communities; and

WHEREAS, with blatant disregard for the rule of law, President Trump has punished jurisdictions that do not enforce his federal immigration priorities by withholding federal funding from so-called sanctuary cities, filing lawsuits against them, and threatening criminal action against their elected leaders; and

WHEREAS, President Trump's administration has deployed aggressive immigration enforcement operations, often carried out by masked agents without visible identification of the government agency they represent; and

WHEREAS, City laws and SPD policies require Seattle police officers to be clearly identifiable when engaged in public safety activities, including wearing department emblems, name tags, and badges with serial numbers. These laws and policies further require Seattle police officers to identify themselves when requested with limited exceptions; and

WHEREAS, in response to President Trump’s rhetoric against immigrants and refugees and prior to his inauguration this year, Mayor Harrell issued a Mayoral Directive Regarding Federal Immigration Enforcement, which reaffirms that civil immigration enforcement is exclusively a federal responsibility and requires all requests from federal immigration enforcement agencies be directed to the Mayor’s Office for legal review and action; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle has sued President Trump, challenging the constitutionality of several of his Executive Orders, including actions that try to withhold federal funds from jurisdictions that do not assist with federal civil immigration enforcement, arguing that such action is unlawful and violates constitutional principles of separation of powers and federalism; and

WHEREAS, after receiving an August 2025 letter from U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi, identifying the City of Seattle as a sanctuary jurisdiction and demanding a list of immediate initiatives to eliminate laws, policies, and practices that arguably impede federal immigration enforcement, Mayor Bruce Harrell responded by declaring that Seattle’s policies and ordinances already comply with federal law; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle will not yield to pressure or intimidation from President Trump and remains committed to defending the rights and dignity of immigrants and refugees in our city;

NOW THEREFORE, I, Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor of Seattle, order the following actions to safeguard the constitutional rights of Seattle residents and ensure the City continues to serve all Seattleites with respect and dignity.

1. Support for and Engagement with Immigrant and Refugee Communities

The City shall ensure Seattle remains a Welcoming City for immigrant and refugee communities.

- A. The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) shall support culturally responsive community education and “know your rights” initiatives by:
 - i. Working with community partners to produce “Know Your Rights” resources and organize educational events in multiple languages.
 - ii. Organizing a resource fair bringing together community members, partner organizations, and City departments to foster local coordination and resource-sharing for immigrant community members.
 - iii. Coordinating with partner organizations and ethnic media to provide in-language information about community resources, legal rights, and advocacy support that is clear and accessible to our most vulnerable communities.

- B. The Mayor's proposed 2026 budget increases OIRA's budget by more than \$4 million dollars (representing a 61% increase to OIRA's annual budget) to expand existing and new programming to support the immigrant and refugee community, including:
 - i. Representation and other legal services, workforce development programs, outreach, community navigation services, and other critical programs.
 - ii. Expanding critical efforts in workforce development, rapid response services, legal defense support, and immigrant safety and access initiatives.
 - iii. Expanding our naturalization services, the development of immigrant youth career pathways, strengthened community navigation services, and increased outreach through ethnic media, translation, and community advisory resources.
- C. OIRA shall meet regularly with stakeholder and community advocacy groups to discuss issues and concerns of immigrant communities, with the goal of strengthening the City's support for immigrants and refugees.

2. Holding the Federal Government Accountable

- A. The Mayor's Office shall develop and send to the City Council an ordinance to ban the use of face masks by law enforcement and those engaging in law enforcement activities, including federal officials, with limited exceptions. The ordinance will further require any law enforcement agent operating within the City to have markings, including visible emblems and badges, identifying their agency. This ordinance will be transmitted within 21 days of issuance of this Executive Order.
- B. The Mayor's Office shall develop and send to the City Council an ordinance prohibiting staging and operations of federal civil immigration enforcement activities on City property to the extent permissible by law.
- C. To create transparency on federal civil immigration-related actions that impact the City of Seattle, the City through the Mayor's Office will regularly submit Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to obtain information related to federal immigration enforcement activity within the city. These requests will seek data on:
 - i. The date, time, and location of enforcement actions;
 - ii. The names of individuals arrested or detained;
 - iii. The stated basis or alleged criminal conduct underlying detentions or arrests.

This information will help Seattle better understand how federal enforcement affects our communities and to identify any patterns of bias or overreach. The City of Seattle's objective in this regard is to protect residents' rights, increase trust between community members and local government, and ensure that federal actions within Seattle are subject to oversight.

3. City Role in Immigration Enforcement and Bias-Free Policing

- A. The City reaffirms that SPD's policies, practices, and enforcement activities are consistent with the Seattle City Charter, the Washington State Constitution, the United States Constitution, and other state and local laws. As set forth in the City Charter, the Mayor – not the president or any federal employee – is responsible for seeing that the laws in the City are enforced and for maintaining peace and order in the City.
- B. Current SPD policy recognizes that local law enforcement has no role in or jurisdiction over federal civil immigration enforcement. SPD policy also includes the following restrictions:
 - i. SPD officers (along with all City employees) are prohibited from inquiring about any person's citizenship or immigration status.
 - ii. SPD officers will not request specific documents from individuals for the sole purpose of determining a person's immigration status.
 - iii. SPD officers will not initiate, maintain, or participate in any police action – including federal civil enforcement efforts – based on an individual's immigration status.
 - iv. SPD officers are required to record responses to 911 calls, including those calls involving potential immigration enforcement, via body-worn video, and patrol officers must be in uniform and with their badge and last name clearly visible.
- C. Given the increase in immigration enforcement by the Trump administration, including warrantless arrests and detentions by masked and un-uniformed individuals, SPD will issue a directive to officers providing guidance on these incidents. This directive will be issued within 30 days of this Executive Order.
 - i. At a minimum, this directive will provide guidance to officers on responding to 911 calls where community members report potential interactions with individuals appearing to be federal, state, or local law enforcement personnel who are not clearly identifiable as law enforcement and are not displaying official credentials.
 - ii. The directive will require that:
 - i. officers respond to the scene;

- ii. a sworn supervisor also responds to the scene as soon as practical;
- iii. body worn cameras be activated at the scene;
- iv. officers attempt to validate the status of the person attempting to engage in enforcement activities; and
- v. the officers' actions be documented in a report.

4. Citywide Training

- A. OIRA will develop and deliver training for all City of Seattle employees to provide clear protocols and procedures for complying with state and local immigration enforcement laws, which will include directives, such as:
 - i. City officers and employees are generally prohibited from asking about immigration status, unless otherwise required by law or by court order.
 - ii. City employees will serve all residents and City services will be accessible to all residents, regardless of immigration status.
 - iii. The City, including the Seattle Police Department, is prohibited from and does not carry out federal civil immigration enforcement actions or otherwise assist in immigration enforcement, which is solely the responsibility of the federal government.
 - iv. All requests by federal immigration enforcement to access non-public areas in City buildings and properties and requests for data or information shall be directed to the Mayor's Office for legal review. The Mayor's Office, in consultation with the City Attorney's Office as appropriate, will review credentials and submission of written authority to conduct action and determine appropriate approval or denial of the request. In all cases, City employees are directed to ask federal immigration enforcement agents to wait to enter any non-public areas until the Mayor's Office is contacted and responds.

Inquiries regarding this Executive Order should be directed to Chief of Staff Andrew Myerberg and Deputy Mayor & General Counsel Greg Wong.

Dated this 8th day of October, 2025.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Bruce A. Harrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bruce" and last name "Harrell" clearly legible.

Bruce A. Harrell
Mayor of Seattle