

Access to Houses of Worship, School, and the Courts is a Constitutional Right

The right to freely exercise and express one's religion. Ensuring safe learning spaces for children. Building a healthy nation. Protecting due process and access to the courts. These are the U.S. values that sensitive location policies have protected. Current immigration practices threaten them all.

For more than three decades under both Democrat and Republican administrations, immigration enforcement at or near places like educational institutions, healthcare facilities, places of worship, and social services providers occurred only under exceptional circumstances. Those executive guidelines were rescinded in January 2025, sowing fear and confusion in our communities.

Quaker belief holds that security for some cannot be built on practices that rely on or result in violence or insecurity for others. To fill these spaces with armed agents and the threat of force dishonors their purpose, eroding the shared security of constitutional rights, religious freedom, community prosperity, and peace for all Americans. Enduring security, as scripture teaches, grows where justice meets peace, leading to quietness and lasting trust among all people (Psalm 85:10; Isaiah 32:17).

Congress must pass legislation that affirms the necessity of access to sensitive locations and counters the constitutional and civic harms caused by the U.S. government's current enforcement tactics.

The stripping of protections for sensitive locations not only harms immigrant communities but also disrupts daily activities and access to services for all Americans. When enforcement activities increase and clear boundaries are lacking, trust in public spaces weakens, and people grow hesitant to engage in them. A school district in Idaho experienced a sharp rise in student absences following a local immigration enforcement action that apprehended over 100 individuals. Almost 20% of students were absent the next day, nearly doubling the typical rate of absences.¹ Faith leaders from across the country have documented instances of immigration enforcement presence at or near places of worship, with attendance at religious services plummeting.² In hospitals, increased immigration enforcement has impacted healthcare professionals' ability to provide sufficient patient care.³ These impacts diminish community vitality and harm all community members, citizens and noncitizens alike.

Codifying preexisting protections for sensitive locations would uphold core U.S. values and rights. Congress should promote a society where justice and peace are intertwined and communal trust is strengthened.

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¹ <https://www.idahostatesman.com/news/local/education/article312663144.html>

² <https://religionnews.com/2025/08/04/when-ice-detains-people-on-church-grounds-pastors-say-congregations-suffer/>

³ <https://www.axios.com/2025/10/14/trump-immigration-policy-hospitals-emergency>