

What is at stake with the conflict between the federal government and local governments over sanctuary cities?

Document 1 - Homeland Security pulls down list of 'sanctuary' cities and counties after backlash

NPR, by Ximena Bustillo, June 2, 2025

The Department of Homeland Security removed a list of "sanctuary jurisdictions" days after the agency posted it on its website.

The list included dozens of cities and counties across 37 states and the District of Columbia that DHS said were in noncompliance with federal statutes.

"DHS demands that these jurisdictions immediately review and revise their policies to align with Federal immigration laws and renew their obligation to protect American citizens, not dangerous illegal aliens," the DHS page stated.

The list, which posted late last week and came down on Sunday, was supposed to be the latest step in the Trump administration's effort to push back against local municipalities that it believes are obstructing its goals to increase immigration-related arrests and deportations. Since the start of the administration, mayors and governors of cities seen as "sanctuary" have been called to testify in Congress and federal agencies have looked into curbing federal resources from these areas.

In practice, sanctuary jurisdictions prohibit local law enforcement from assisting federal immigration officials on immigration-related operations.

But the list quickly faced intense criticism from mayors and law enforcement confused as to why they had been included. Over the weekend, the National Sheriffs' Association President Sheriff Kieran Donahue accused DHS of lacking transparency and accountability in how the list was compiled.

"This list was created without any input, criteria of compliance, or a mechanism for how to object to the designation. Sheriffs nationwide have no way to know what they must do or not do to avoid this arbitrary label," Donahue said, calling on DHS to remove the list. "This decision by DHS could create a vacuum of trust that may take years to overcome."

Local leaders across the country also raised issues with their inclusion on the list. Mayors from Boise, Idaho, and San Diego, for example, were surprised to see their cities named. Colorado leaders also raised concerns; Aurora was removed before the list was posted.

President Trump issued an executive order on April 28 that directed the department and the attorney general to publish a list of states and local jurisdictions "obstructing

federal immigration law enforcement and notify each sanctuary jurisdiction of its non-compliance, providing an opportunity to correct it."

"Some of the cities have pushed back. They think that because they don't have one law or another on the books that they don't qualify but they do qualify," DHS Secretary Kristi Noem on Fox's Sunday Morning Futures.

The list, a senior DHS official said in a statement to NPR, is constantly reviewed, can be changed at any time and will be "regularly" updated.

"Designation of a sanctuary jurisdiction is based on the evaluation of numerous factors, including self-identification as a Sanctuary Jurisdiction, noncompliance with Federal law enforcement in enforcing immigration laws, restrictions on information sharing, and legal protections for illegal aliens," the official's statement said.

Since taking office, the Trump administration has taken steps to retaliate against jurisdictions it considered "sanctuary." For example, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services ended coordination on naturalization ceremonies with "sanctuary cities that restrict the ability of law enforcement to cooperate with DHS – in defiance of the rule of law – to enforce immigration laws and keep American communities safe from illegal and violent aliens," according to USCIS spokesman Matthew Tragesser.

The administration has vowed to review federal disaster aid and other assistance that goes to "sanctuary jurisdictions." The withholding of funding prompted lawsuits from 16 jurisdictions. A judge blocked the move.

The administration has also taken cities to court over policies it says limit cooperation with immigration authorities.

Document 2 - Judge throws out Trump's lawsuit against Illinois over sanctuary policies

Politico, by Kyle Cheney & Josh Gerstein, July 25, 2025

A federal judge has thrown out the Trump administration's bid to force Illinois and Chicago to aid its mass deportation agenda, saying it would encroach on autonomy guaranteed to states under the Constitution.

U.S. District Judge Lindsay Jenkins concluded that the lawsuit — the first filed by the administration this year trying to upend so-called "sanctuary policies" in states and cities — was an "end-run around the Tenth Amendment," which protects states from federal government overreach.

In a 64-page ruling Friday, the Biden-appointed judge said federal laws "permit" states to cooperate with the federal government on immigration enforcement, but do

not require it. Therefore, states can't be forced to partner with federal efforts, she said, citing a series of Supreme Court rulings that block the federal government from "commandeering" state or local officials to perform federal duties.

The ruling is a setback for Trump, the first defeat in a series of similar lawsuits the Justice Department filed against states and cities that have adopted sanctuary policies that limit their employees' cooperation with federal immigration enforcement. Other suits have been filed against cities in California, New Jersey and New York.

Justice Department spokespeople did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the ruling.

An Illinois state law passed in 2021 and related policies prohibit local and state officials from sharing any person's custody status, release date, or contact information with federal immigration officials.

The Justice Department argued those measures were preempted by federal law, but Jenkins rejected that argument as well as the Trump administration's claims that the state law unconstitutionally discriminated against the federal government. She also said the administration's effort to coerce the state to carry out federal immigration policy could impose impermissible costs on the states.

The judge also found that the Justice Department had no legal basis for naming Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker as a defendant in the suit and said DOJ lawyers "openly" conceded as much. She ordered him dismissed from the case.

A similar suit the Justice Department filed against California in 2018 led to a federal appeals court ruling rebuffing the administration's request to block that state's legal restrictions on information sharing.

Related disputes about DOJ's efforts to cut off federal funds to sanctuary jurisdictions were pending at the Supreme Court when Biden appointees took over in 2021. The high court dismissed the petitions at the Biden administration's request, without deciding whether state and local governments can be forced to cooperate with federal immigration authorities.

Document 3 - Trump administration threatens to withhold federal funds from 'sanctuary' states like CT

The Bulletin, by Trevor Hugues & Margie Cullen, August 13, 2024

The Trump administration is threatening to sue and withhold federal funds from more than 20 "sanctuary" states, cities and counties, because of their lack of cooperation with federal immigration enforcement.

The new list, released Aug. 5 by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Public Affairs, includes three states and one city in New England: Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont and Boston, Massachusetts.

"Sanctuary policies impede law enforcement and put American citizens at risk by design," Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a statement. "The Department of Justice will continue bringing litigation against sanctuary jurisdictions and work closely with the Department of Homeland Security to eradicate these harmful policies around the country."

Inclusion on the list comes with the explicit threat of lawsuits and federal funding halts. And border czar Tom Homan has previously promised to "flood" those jurisdictions with Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. In February, he said he would be "bringing hell" to Boston.

Several federal judges have blocked the administration's previous efforts to punish some of those jurisdictions, including Chicago and Portland, Oregon.

Earlier this year, the White House published and then almost immediately withdrew a significantly longer list after many communities on the list said they were erroneously included. In many of the jurisdictions included on the new list, including Boston, local leaders have argued that allowing police to partner with ICE discourages crime victims and witnesses from coming forward regardless of their immigration status.

In announcing the new list, which also includes both New York City and the state of New York, Chicago and San Francisco, the White House highlighted how Louisville, Kentucky, had agreed to end sanctuary policies while facing threat of a lawsuit.

What is a 'sanctuary jurisdiction'?

There's no specific legal definition of a sanctuary jurisdiction, but Bondi's office said it considered things like failure to collaborate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, providing government benefits to undocumented immigrants, or refusing to share immigration information about jail detainees.

Federal courts are currently weighing several lawsuits brought by the Trump administration against jurisdictions on the sanctuary list. A federal judge last month threw out the Trump administration's sanctuary jurisdiction lawsuit against Chicago and surrounding Cook County.

Is Boston a 'sanctuary city'?

Under the Trust Act, Boston city law enforcement officials are prohibited from cooperating with ICE to carry out civil warrants. The 2014 law makes many characterize Boston as a sanctuary city, though Boston Mayor Michelle Wu's administration doesn't use the term. Boston police officers work with immigration officials only on criminal warrants.

"Whenever someone commits a crime, whenever there's a criminal warrant, we hold them accountable," Wu said during a March hearing in front of Congress. "If ICE deems that they are dangerous enough to obtain a criminal warrant, we hold them accountable."

During that hearing, Wu touted the city's safety record and pushed back against "the false narrative" that all immigrants are criminals.

"The false narrative is that immigrants in general are criminals, or immigrants in general cause all sorts of danger and harm, that is actually what is undermining safety in our communities," Wu said.

Massachusetts was named on the original list of sanctuary states released in May, but it wasn't included this time. MA Gov. Maura Healey has said several times the Massachusetts isn't a sanctuary state.

Which communities have been described as immigrant 'sanctuaries'?

According to the Department of Justice, the following communities are offering "sanctuary" to immigrants who lack the legal right to be in this country.

United States Attorney General Pam Bondi has said the list could change as cities, counties or states changed policies in the future.

States:

California	Washington	Boston, MA
Colorado	Counties:	Chicago, IL
Connecticut		Denver, CO
Delaware	Baltimore County, MD	East Lansing, MI
District of Columbia	Cook County, IL	Hoboken, NJ
Illinois	San Diego County, CA	Jersey City, NJ
Minnesota	San Francisco County, CA	Los Angeles, CA
Nevada		New Orleans, LA
New York	Cities:	New York City, NY
Oregon		Newark, NJ
Rhode Island	Albuquerque, NM	Paterson, NJ
Vermont	Berkeley, CA	Philadelphia, PA

Portland, OR

Rochester, NY

Seattle, WA

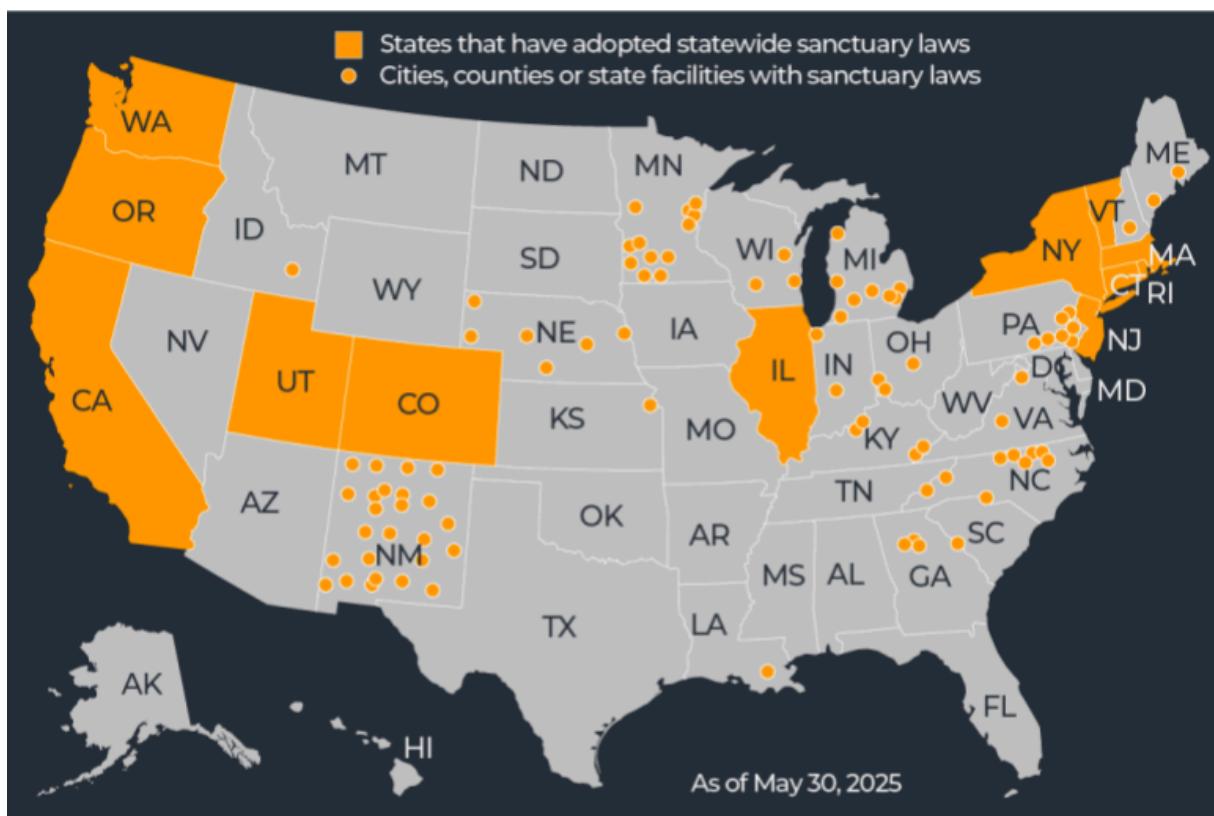
San Francisco City, CA

Document 4

UNITED STATES

What are sanctuary cities?

Sanctuary cities are local jurisdictions such as cities, counties, or states that limit their cooperation with federal immigration enforcement, particularly US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), to protect undocumented immigrants from deportation.



Sanctuary laws differ from place to place. Some ban asking about immigration status, while others only refuse to hold people on ICE detainers.

Being in a sanctuary city or state does not mean someone is safe from deportation. ICE can still operate and arrest people in sanctuary jurisdictions.

Document 5



The Virginian Pilot, by Michael Ramirez