

City Programs and Policies in a Changing Federal Context

Mayor's Office
Office of Intergovernmental Relations
Office of Immigration & Refugee Affairs
Human Services Department

Council Briefing
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One Seattle

Mayor Harrell's ***One Seattle*** values prioritize building a city that is inclusive and welcoming for all; a city where we champion human rights, women's rights; stand for environmental sustainability and international peace; where we recognize the contributions of immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ+ communities, communities of color, and those historically marginalized.



Upcoming Federal Changes

What to expect:

- Congress will use **budget reconciliation**, which allows them to approve budget-related legislation with a simple majority in the Senate, to pass a package centered on immigration and tax cuts.
- **Slowdowns** on the departmental level due to turnover on both the Cabinet and staff level. Congress will begin hearing President-elect's nominees this week.
- A slew of **executive orders** directed toward issues such as immigration, health, and defense. In his first administration, President-elect Trump signed seven executive orders in the first ten days. Last week, he previewed 100 executive orders to Republican leadership.

Three types of federal funding to watch:

1. Funding set on **formula** basis should remain more stable than the competitive side.
2. FY2025 **earmarks** are expected to pass under the continuing resolution, which is set to expire in March, however there is a possibility the amounts decrease.
3. New conditions may be placed on **competitive** grant opportunities, which we will monitor closely.



Upcoming Federal Changes

What OIR and the Mayor's Office is doing to prepare:

- Monitoring announcements, proposals, and policy daily.
- Strong lines of internal communication to maximize coordination and analysis.
- Constant communication with the City's on-the-ground lobbying team in DC and Seattle's Congressional delegation.
- Regional coordination with government partners at the State, County, and local level.
- Ongoing preparedness for administration change including finalizing grant agreements, evaluating resources for response to federal policies, staff trainings, and more.



Federal Immigration Policies: Historic Perspective

A Broken Immigration System

The U.S. immigration system has faced long-standing challenges, predating any single administration. While rhetoric around immigration shifts, deportation numbers have remained relatively consistent across administration changes. However, these changes often lead to uncertainty, fear, and significant human impacts, such as family separations and disruptions in immigrant communities.

Key Policy Actions (2016–2020)

During this period, several immigration policies and executive actions sparked national debate and legal challenges:

- **Public Charge Rule:** Expanded the criteria for determining public charge, discouraging families from accessing essential public services and creating a "chilling effect."
- **Attempt to Terminate DACA:** Threatened protections for undocumented youth, causing widespread instability.
- **Travel Ban:** An executive order restricted entry for individuals from several countries, primarily Muslim-majority nations, separating families and disrupting communities.
- **Family Separations:** Policies separated children from parents during detention, raising humanitarian concerns.
- **Legal Immigration Restrictions:** Procedural changes created delays and barriers for naturalization and other lawful immigration processes.



Community Concerns: Federal Immigration Policy Changes with New Administration

Here are some of the **concerns we're hearing** due to the incoming president's calls for mass deportations and immigration regulatory rollbacks, as well as the comprehensive policy agenda Project 2025, developed by the Heritage Foundation and widely discussed in public forums:

Primary Concerns:

- **Mass Raids:** Potential raids in communities, businesses, and government agencies creating fear and uncertainty.
- **Reinstatement of Public Charge Rules:** Discouraging access to essential services like healthcare and housing.
- **Threats to Immigration Protections:** Possible end of DACA, TPS, and Humanitarian Parole, leaving many without work authorization.

The Chilling Effect and Its Consequences:

Whether these **actions occur or not**, the chilling effect creates real consequences:

- Residents may hesitate to report crimes, access services, or participate in City programs, leading to a breakdown of trust between communities and government agencies, which undermines collaboration and public safety.
- Fear can lead to underutilization of critical healthcare services, resulting in untreated illnesses and broader public health risks.
- Students from immigrant families may avoid attending school,
- Businesses employing immigrants may experience labor shortages as workers avoid public visibility.



Policies Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Communities

In Washington State and Seattle, we have policies to help our immigrant and refugee communities thrive. Seattle is home to over **143,687 foreign-born residents**, including **21,000 undocumented individuals** and **20,000 U.S. citizens** living with undocumented family members, such as **6,000 U.S. citizen children**.

Potential Workforce Impact

- **16,000 undocumented workers** are part of Seattle's labor force.
- **6,000 workers** with current work authorizations risk losing them under federal policy changes.

State Laws

- **Keep Washington Working Act (2019)**: Prohibits local enforcement of federal immigration laws and limits sharing personal information with federal authorities except for criminal investigations or court orders.
- **Courts Open to All Act (2020)**: Ensures courthouses remain accessible to all, regardless of immigration status.

Local Policies

- **Seattle Ordinance 121063**: Prohibits City officers and City employees from inquiring about immigration status.
- **Resolution 31730 (2017)**: Ensures access to city services for all residents and guides City response regarding federal enforcement efforts.



OIRA Programs

In partnership with 30 community-based organizations, OIRA works to ensure Seattle's immigrant and refugee communities receive essential services, focusing on legal support, workforce development, and coordinated response initiatives.

Legal Support

- Provides representation for residents, workers, and students facing detention or removal, prioritizing unaccompanied minors, and ensures children receive legal assistance to protect their rights and improve case outcomes.

Workforce Development

- Prepares immigrants for careers with English proficiency, digital literacy, and job skills training, and 75% of participants report better employment opportunities, boosting the economy and communities.

Coordinated Response (2025)

- Combats misinformation with outreach, Know Your Rights trainings, and support coordination, preventing outcry, saving resources, and building trust.



OIRA Next Steps: Advancing Regional Collaboration

Community Initiatives and Training

- Partner with CBOs to deliver **Know Your Rights** trainings for immigrant communities.
- Train City staff to comply with laws protecting all residents.

Policy, Advocacy, and Engagement

- Track and respond to federal policy changes.
- Collaborate with the Governor-elect's Project 2025 committee and State Attorney General-elect's Office to address policy impacts.
- Engage immigrant voices in policy development and propose a regional task force for coordinated support.

Goals

- Establish a unified approach to challenges and ensuring Seattle's priorities are represented.
- Ensure residents receive accurate information and counter misinformation effectively.



Mayoral Directive

Seattle Mayoral Directive on Federal Immigration Enforcement

Date: January 10, 2025 | Issued by: Mayor Bruce Harrell

Key Objectives:

- Protect the rights, safety, and privacy of all Seattle residents, regardless of immigration status.
- Prevent City resources from being used for federal immigration enforcement.
- Strengthen community trust to ensure effective public safety and law enforcement.

Implementation Steps:

- **Lead Staff Identification:** Departments must assign leads by January 17, 2025.
- **Policy Review:** Update all policies and materials to align with city and state laws by January 31, 2025.
- **Training:** OIRA will lead “train-the-trainer” sessions for staff preparedness.
- **Know Your Rights Trainings:** OIRA will partner with CBOs in providing training sessions
- **ICE Requests:** All departments to direct all requests to the Mayor’s Office for review.
- **Community Engagement:** Convene immigrant and refugee communities to address concerns and share policies.



Protections for our LGBTQ+ Community

Seattle and Washington State offer robust protections for our LGBTQ+ community, including anti-hate crime laws and anti-discrimination laws protecting people based on their sexual orientation and their gender expression or identity. Sexual orientation and gender identity are **protected** classes under state and city law. We encourage people to report instances of bias crime or discrimination against any of our protected classes.

Seattle Police Department's Bias Crimes Unit - <https://www.seattle.gov/police/safety/harassment>

Washington's Hate Crime laws, RCW 9A.36.080 (1981), make it a Class C Felony offense if a person maliciously and intentionally assaults, physically damages property, or threatens a specific person or group because of their perception of another person's protected class status. Seattle Police Department's Bias Crimes Unit performs criminal investigations, acts as a resource to patrol and other follow up units, engages in officer training, public outreach, and is responsible for maintaining hate crime and incident data.

Seattle Office for Civil Rights Enforcement Division - <https://www.seattle.gov/civilrights>

Seattle's anti-discrimination laws, Seattle Municipal Code 14.04 through SMC 14.21, protect against discrimination in areas including Employment, Housing, Public Accommodations, and Fair Contracting. SOCR' enforcement team can assist people in filing claims and investigations are free.

We'll continue to actively monitor any potential actions against our LGBTQ+ community in consultation with our regional and state partners, Seattle's LGBTQ+ Commission, and community-based organizations.



LGBTQ+ Local Investments

Below are a few of the many investments the City provides to organizations serving the needs our LGBTQ+ community

Seattle LGBTQ+ Center Recognition & Response Workshops

- Recognition & Response Skills workshop series seeks to empower BIPOC LGBTQ+ individuals with the skills to identify and respond to harm within their communities and relationships.

Gay City Health Project: LGBTQ+ Resource and Referral Line

- Connects LGBTQ+ individuals facing various challenges with community resources through referrals.

Lambert House Homeless & At-Risk Youth & Young Adult Drop-in

- Offers in-person and online programs to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, such as family conflict, school bullying, lack of support, depression, low self-esteem, and substance use.

GenPride

- Provides culturally relevant training programs focused on health, housing, and social service providers with the goal of providing essential services to LGBTQ older adults.



Reproductive Rights Protections

Similarly, in Washington State we have robust legal protections for reproductive rights:

- **Washington Reproductive Privacy Act (1991)** provides for a pregnant individual's right to choose to have an abortion prior to viability of the fetus, or to protect the pregnant individual's life or health
- **Washington Shield Law (2023)** protects people in Washington from civil and criminal actions in other states that restrict or criminalize reproductive and gender-affirming care
- **Washington Reproductive Parity Act (2018)** requires that all state-regulated health care plans that cover maternity services also cover abortion services.
- **Washington Reproductive Health Access for All Act (2019)** makes it illegal for health plans to deny coverage to trans and nonbinary people.



Reproductive Rights Protections and Resources

Locally, Mayor Harrell and the City Council partnered on the following actions after Roe v. Wade was overturned in 2022:

- **CB 120374** adds people who have received or are seeking abortions as a protected class, ensuring their civil rights' protections.
- **CB 120376** creates a misdemeanor charge for people who encroach on individuals seeking abortions or gender affirming care.
- **CB 120375** prohibits SPD and CAO from assisting out-of-state law enforcement and other entities inquiring about abortion-related care and prevents pursuit of out-of-state warrants related to abortions by Seattle Police.
- **CB 120366** appropriated \$250,000 of City funds to fund expanded access to reproductive healthcare by making an investment in Northwest Abortion Access Fund.

“The Supreme Court’s decision is a dangerous and decades-long leap backwards that will lead to significant and harmful consequences for women and all those seeking abortions, with disproportionate impacts falling on women of color. We must use every tool available to safeguard fundamental civil rights of privacy and autonomy. These bills take necessary action to ensure that Seattle is a city where abortion and reproductive healthcare are available to all who seek it and that we are ready and able to safely serve patients from out of state seeking care here. I want to thank the advocates and providers who have stood firm in their commitment to safe, accessible care.”
- Mayor Bruce Harrell (8/22)



Next Steps

- Implement the new Mayoral Directive to ensure we're well-situated across departments Citywide for immigration response
- Ensure continued internal coordination among departments and OIR on potential changes and response. Some responses may need to be legal (CAO coordination) or legislative (Council coordination)
- Continue to collaborate and keep open lines of communication with local, regional, state partners, along with our national network at the US Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities.



Thank you

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City of Seattle