Undocumented Immigrants Fear ICE is Obtaining Their Home Address from AB-60 Licenses

When California passed a law creating a driver's license for undocumented residents, applicants were told their information would not be used against them. Now, license-holders and applicants fear immigration officers are finding where they live from DMV.

By Gaby Rodriguez and Tom Jones

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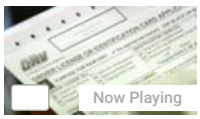
Immigrants Fear ICE is Obtaining Their Address From The DMV

AB-60 drivers licenses were supposed to be a solution to a problem plaguing undocumented immigrants. Now the aid is being seen as a potential threat. NBC 7's Gaby Rodriguez has more. (Published Wednesday, June 27, 2018)



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California's AB-60 driver's license was touted as a possible solution to the state's uninsured motorist problem. Those licenses allowed undocumented residents to drive legally as well as acquire much-needed insurance coverage.

But NBC 7 Investigates found many undocumented immigrants fear that those licenses are now leading Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to their front door. License holders said their fears go against what the licenses were meant to do.

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basis for a criminal investigation, arrest or detention".

That's why "Jose" said he was shocked when he woke one morning to ICE agents at his Escondido home. "Jose" did not want us to use his real name because he fears for his safety and fears that agents will show up at his door to deport him, despite him not having a criminal record.

"Jose" is a native Spanish-speaker and we've translated his answers to our questions.

"They asked me, is this you?" he told NBC 7 Investigates during an interview in May. During his arrest "Jose" said ICE Agents showed him a copy of his AB-60 license.

"Look, we have your record here," they told him.

"Jose" was one of more than 100 people taken into custody during a north county ICE operation back in March.

"They are going to come to knock on your door if they choose to. People warned me," he said. "But I believed it when the state said it wouldn't be that way."

Roger Sato, an attorney for the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)'s Legal Affairs Division, told NBC 7 Investigates no written agreement or policy is in place between ICE and the DMV in regards to the sharing of AB-60 driver's license information.

After filing a public record request with the DMV, NBC 7 Investigates found a way AB-60 information is accessible to government agencies is through a "Government Requester Account Application".

Sato said the form allows law enforcement agencies to request details on anyone with a license, including those with AB-60 licenses.

"The applicant would cite the statutory authority that authorizes their agency's access to the information," Sato said in an email.

NBC 7 Investigates requested the number of times ICE has requested license information by using a "Government Requester Account Application". The DMV said from January 1, 2017, through May 5, 2018, ICE agents had requested information using this form eight times.

Still, immigration attorney Dulce Garcia told NBC 7 Investigates she believes ICE is obtaining license holder addresses far more often than that.

Garcia said ICE Agents have detained some of her clients with a copy of their AB-60 licenses already in-hand, similar to "Jose". She told NBC 7 Investigates she worries for license holders, one of those being her father.

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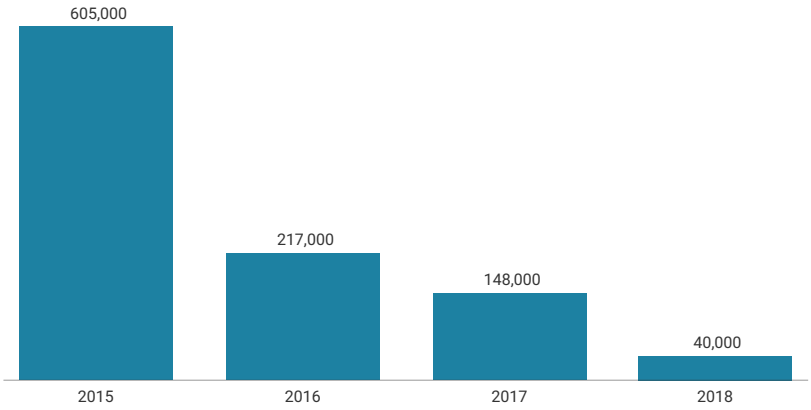
The fear of this might be a reason for a dramatic decrease in the number of the people applying for AB-60 licenses.

Number of AB60 Driver's Licenses Issued



Total approximate statewide statistics, according to the DMV. 2018 figures through April 26.
Chart: NBC 7 Investigates • Source: CA Department of Motor Vehicles • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

In 2015, when AB-60 licenses were first issued, more than 600,000 licenses were issued, according to records released by the DMV. By 2017, the number of licenses issued decreased by 75-percent with only 148,000 issued statewide.

Lauren Mack, a spokeswoman for ICE, told NBC 7 Investigates by email that her department follows all policies and procedures when requesting information for a federal investigation. Mack would not answer specific questions asked about agents having access to California's AB-60 license information.

"If I wouldn't have applied for the AB-60 license, I would have more peace of mind today," "Jose" told NBC 7 Investigates. "But not having it, it is a double-edged sword."

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