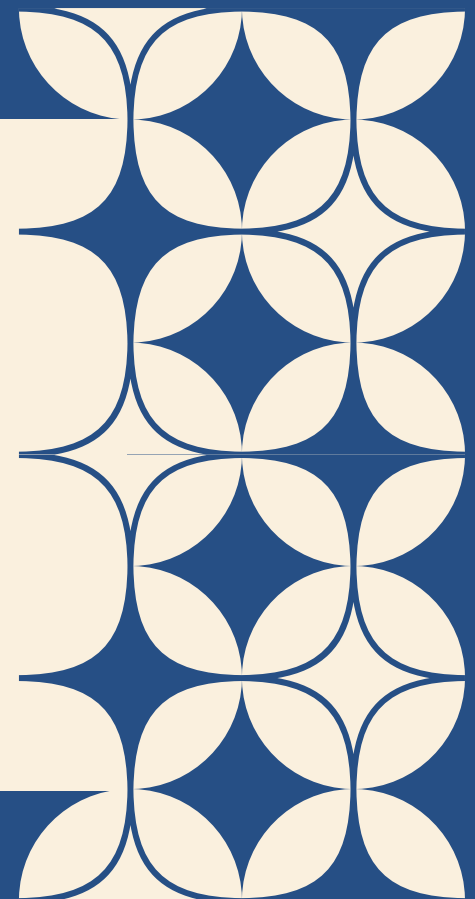


POLICY NEWSLETTER

**Policy Shifts & Hate Crimes in 2025:
Key Updates Affecting South Asian
Communities**

June 2025

 **Access to Justice**



POLICY SHIFTS IN 2025: KEY UPDATES AFFECTING SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITIES

- Executive Order "Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship"
- Executive Order "Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats"
- Executive Order "Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling"
- Challenge to New York's "Green Light Law"
- Illinois Proposed State Budget Cut to Healthcare Program
- Restricting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats



EXECUTIVE ORDER "PROTECTING THE MEANING AND VALUE OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP"

Overview: On January 20, 2025, President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 14160, "Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship," to redefine birthright citizenship. The order stipulates that children born in the United States are citizens only if their mother is either a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident, or if their father holds such status, thereby excluding children born to mothers who are unlawfully present or on temporary visas, unless the father is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident.

Effect on South Asian Communities: This policy has significant implications for South Asian communities. This more restrictive policy affects immigrants on temporary visas or who may be undocumented. Children born under these circumstances may face citizenship denials, leading to increased uncertainties regarding family stability and access to essential resources like obtaining legal documentation, healthcare, and education. Families may face heightened risks of deportation or separation, particularly if their legal status is challenged. The policy could also discourage skilled workers from South Asia, such as those on H-1B visas, from seeking employment in the U.S. due to concerns about their children's citizenship status.



June 2025 UPDATE



Since its issuance, the executive order has encountered multiple legal challenges. Federal courts in New Hampshire and Maryland have issued nationwide preliminary injunctions blocking the enforcement of the order, citing conflicts with the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In response, the Trump administration has appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court to limit the scope of these injunctions, arguing that they hinder the executive branch's functions. The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on June 15, 2025, focusing on whether lower courts had the authority to issue nationwide injunctions against the order. While the Court did not issue a ruling that day, the justices appeared divided on the legitimacy and scope of such injunctions. A decision is expected by the end of June 2025.

If you would like to write to your congress member, telling them to support the Born in the USA Act to defend citizenship and the future of AAPI and immigrant communities, you can do so [here](#).

EXECUTIVE ORDER "PROTECTING THE UNITED STATES FROM FOREIGN TERRORISTS AND OTHER NATIONAL SECURITY AND PUBLIC SAFETY THREATS"

Overview: On January 20, 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order, "Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats." This order mandates enhanced screening and vetting procedures for all individuals seeking admission to, or currently residing in, the United States. It directs federal agencies to identify necessary resources to maximize vetting processes, re-establish uniform screening standards as of January 19, 2021, and focuses on individuals from regions or nations with identified security risks. This has led the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State to implement stricter vetting procedures for visa applicants, leading to increased processing times and more rigorous background checks.

Effect on South Asian Communities: These measures have raised concerns among immigrant communities and advocacy groups about potential biases and the impact on individuals from specific countries. In March 2025, a draft list of 43 countries was released, categorizing nations into three tiers based on perceived security risks. Pakistan was placed in the "orange" tier, indicating partial restrictions, such as bans on tourist and immigrant visas, shortened visa validity, enhanced security screenings, mandatory in-person interviews at embassies or consulates, and stricter documentation requirements. Afghanistan was listed in the "red" tier, signifying a full entry ban under any visa category. This expansion significantly affects South Asian immigrants, particularly those from the affected countries, by limiting their ability to travel to the United States.



June 2025 UPDATE



As of June 2025, the implementation of these travel restrictions has been indefinitely postponed, with no new date set. The State Department continues to evaluate which countries will be subjected to the travel restrictions. Immigration advocacy organizations are closely monitoring the situation and preparing to challenge measures they view as discriminatory or overly restrictive. Legal experts anticipate that the enhanced vetting procedures and potential travel bans may face judicial scrutiny, especially concerning their compliance with constitutional protections and anti-discrimination laws.'

EXECUTIVE ORDER “ENDING RADICAL INDOCTRINATION IN K-12 SCHOOLING”

Overview: On January 29, 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order, "Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling," to eliminate protections for transgender students and restrict instruction related to race, gender, and other topics in K-12 education. The order prohibits federally funded schools from recognizing transgender identities, bans transgender students from using restrooms or joining sports teams aligning with their gender identity, and mandates parental notification of any name or pronoun changes, regardless of potential harm. Additionally, it enforces "patriotic education," which may downplay historical issues of race, gender, and discrimination in U.S. history.

Effect on South Asian Communities: This policy could have serious implications for South Asian LGBTQ+ youth in the U.S., including those from conservative or immigrant families where discussing gender and sexuality is often stigmatized. Forced parental notification of name or pronoun changes could lead to familial dysfunction, emotional distress, or even violence at home. The policy's erasure and denial of transgender identities may further isolate South Asian LGBTQ+ youth, limiting their access to safe spaces and supportive communities. Additionally, the push for "patriotic education" could potentially exclude the struggles of immigrants and racial minorities, making it harder for South Asian students to see their histories and experiences reflected in school curriculums.



June 2025 UPDATE



Several legal challenges have emerged since the executive order was issued. Civil rights organizations argue that the order violates federal laws that prohibit the federal government from interfering in state and local decisions about K-12 curriculum. Advocacy groups contend that the order actively harms LGBTQ+ students by compelling schools to disrespect their identities, thereby exposing them to increased harassment and bullying.

As of June 2025, federal courts have issued injunctions blocking the enforcement of key provisions of the order, citing conflicts with constitutional protections. The Department of Education has stated that it is reviewing the order's implications and advises schools to continue following existing federal guidelines that protect students' rights. Despite the legal challenges, the Trump administration has initiated investigations into school districts that continue to support transgender students' rights.

CHALLENGE TO THE NEW YORK'S "GREEN LIGHT LAW"

Overview: On February 12, 2025, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi announced that the Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a lawsuit against New York state officials, including Governor Kathy Hochul and Attorney General Letitia James, challenging the state's "Green Light Law." Enacted in 2019, this law permits undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses without providing a Social Security number, using alternative identification such as foreign passports or driver's licenses. It also restricts the New York Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) from sharing information with federal immigration authorities without a judicial warrant and mandates that individuals be notified if their records are requested by these agencies.

Effect on South Asian Communities: New York hosts a substantial South Asian diaspora community, with many people relying on the state's protections to maintain employment and avoid federal immigration enforcement. Notably, nearly half of New York City's taxi drivers hail from Bangladesh, Pakistan, or India. The Green Light Law enables these drivers, including those with temporary or undocumented status, to obtain driver's licenses essential for their livelihoods. The DOJ's lawsuit threatens to revoke these protections, potentially jeopardizing the employment and legal standing of South Asian immigrants who depend on state-issued licenses for work.



June 2025 UPDATE



In response to the lawsuit, New York Attorney General Letitia James affirmed her commitment to defending the state's laws, emphasizing that the Green Light Law safeguards the rights and safety of all New Yorkers. As of June 2025, the case remains pending in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York, with significant attention from immigrant advocacy groups and communities concerned about the potential implications for state-level immigration policies and the well-being of immigrant populations.

ILLINOIS PROPOSED STATE BUDGET CUT TO HEALTHCARE PROGRAM

Overview: On February 20, 2025, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker unveiled the proposed state budget for fiscal year 2026, which includes the elimination of a \$420 million healthcare program that provides coverage for undocumented immigrants aged 42 to 64. This program, known as Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults (HBIA), offers access to healthcare services for undocumented immigrants within this age group who meet specific income requirements.

Effect on South Asian Communities: The proposed budget cuts could significantly affect Illinois' South Asian community, particularly undocumented immigrants from countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal. In Illinois, approximately 31,000 undocumented immigrants are from India alone. Many South Asian immigrants work in industries that do not provide employer-sponsored health insurance, making programs like HBIA crucial for their access to healthcare services.

June 2025 Update: The proposed budget is currently under review by the Illinois General Assembly, where it may face opposition from legislators who support healthcare access for undocumented immigrants. Advocacy groups are also mobilizing to challenge the cuts, arguing that they could lead to negative public health outcomes and disproportionately impact vulnerable communities, including immigrants from South Asia. As of June 2025, the budget proposal is undergoing negotiations, with stakeholders from various sectors weighing in on the potential implications of the proposed cuts.



“RESTRICTING THE ENTRY OF FOREIGN NATIONALS TO PROTECT THE UNITED STATES FROM FOREIGN TERRORISTS AND OTHER NATIONAL SECURITY AND PUBLIC SAFETY THREATS”

Overview: On June 4, 2025, President Donald Trump issued a proclamation under Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act after a 60-day vetting review (Executive Order 14161). The proclamation fully suspends entry from 12 countries—Afghanistan, Burma (Myanmar), Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen—and partially restricts entry from seven others, including Cuba, Laos, and Venezuela. Exceptions apply for lawful permanent residents, dual nationals travelling on non-restricted passports, and certain visa holders like students, diplomats, and athletes.

Effect on South Asian Communities: Although no South Asian country is directly included in the full or partial restrictions, the proclamation amplifies concerns within South Asian American communities—especially affecting individuals from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and India—about being added to **future lists** under this vetting framework. Past instances of these nations undergoing enhanced scrutiny suggest the possibility of heightened visa delays, increased background checks, or shortened visa validity for non-immigrant applicants.



HATE CRIMES AGAINST SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS SINCE JANUARY 2025

These examples represent only a fraction of the hate crimes experienced by South Asian Americans. Many other incidents remain under investigation or unreported and may ultimately meet the criteria for hate crimes as well.

LEELA LAL

Overview: On February 18, 2025, Leela Lal, a 67-year-old Indian-origin nurse, was brutally assaulted by a patient at Palms West Hospital in West Palm Beach, Florida. The patient, Stephen Eric Scantlebury, 33, repeatedly punched Lal in the face while she was tending to him in the psychiatric ward, leaving her with severe facial fractures that may result in permanent vision loss. During a court hearing, a police officer testified that video footage captured Scantlebury making racially charged statements, including, "Indians are bad" and "I just beat the (expletive) out of an Indian doctor." Scantlebury has been charged with attempted second-degree murder and faces a hate crime enhancement, which could lead to harsher sentencing if convicted.

Effect on South Asian Communities: This violent attack highlights the growing concern over racially motivated violence against South Asians in the United States, particularly in frontline professions like healthcare. Many South Asians, including doctors, nurses, and caregivers, work in high-risk environments where they face exposure to aggression from patients, particularly in psychiatric and emergency care settings.

JUNE 2025 UPDATE

As of June 2025, Leela Lal remains in serious condition following the February assault. After undergoing surgery on the right side of her face, she has been left permanently blind in one eye. During her recovery at Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital in Jacksonville, Lal developed multiple abscesses around the surgical sites on her face. Due to these complications, she is being transferred back to West Palm Beach for additional treatment. Her daughter reports that while Lal has been cleared to begin walking within her rehabilitation room, she still faces significant cognitive challenges and has sustained cranial nerve injuries resulting in double vision and limited eye movement.

In court proceedings, the accused, Stephen Eric Scantlebury, remains in custody without bond. The presiding judge deemed him a danger to the community, citing his violent history and erratic behavior. Testimony revealed Scantlebury displayed paranoid delusions before the attack, including beliefs that his home was bugged and that he was being targeted. Additionally, court records show he was previously convicted of assaulting his father-in-law in Canada in 2018.

The hate crime enhancement to the attempted second-degree murder charge remains in place, potentially increasing the severity of his sentencing if convicted.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR

Overview: On March 8, 2025, the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, the largest Hindu temple in Southern California, was desecrated with anti-Hindu and anti-Indian government graffiti. The vandals scrawled the phrase “Hindustan Murdabad,” meaning “death to” or “down with” Hindus and India, on a pink stone sign bearing the temple’s name. Additional expletive-laden graffiti targeting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was found on an outer brick wall and nearby sidewalk. The San Bernardino Sheriff’s Office classified the incident as a hate crime and launched an investigation.

Effect on South Asian Communities: This act of vandalism has heightened fears among South Asians in the U.S., particularly within the Hindu community, following a rise in similar attacks against Hindu temples in recent years. Many South Asian Americans see this as part of a broader pattern of anti-Hindu sentiment, prompting calls for a deeper discussion on the motivations behind these incidents. The attack also drew international attention, with India’s External Affairs Ministry strongly condemning the vandalism.



MAY 2025 UPDATE

As of June 2025, the investigation into the March 8 vandalism of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Chino Hills, California, remains active. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department continues to pursue leads but has not yet identified any suspects.

MCDONALD'S RESTAURANT IN FREMONT, CALIFORNIA

Overview: On April 5, 2025, a man was charged with a hate crime and battery after an incident at a McDonald's restaurant in Fremont, California. The man allegedly approached an Indian woman and her two children, took their food from them, and ate it in front of them. He then left but returned to slap the woman's face from behind, shouting, "You Indians need to go back to your country." He further escalated the situation by throwing a packet of dipping sauce at the 9-year-old daughter before leaving the scene. The man is now facing charges related to both the assault and the hate crime.

Effect on South Asian Communities: Such incidents heighten feelings of fear, vulnerability, and psychological trauma, especially among women, children, and immigrants. Public spaces like restaurants, usually considered safe, can become sources of anxiety. Also, when individuals are told to "go back to your country," it reinforces the message that they are perpetual outsiders, regardless of citizenship, contribution, or duration of residency. This can be especially harmful to second-generation South Asian Americans.



JUNE 2025 UPDATE

As of June 2025, Marcus Harper remains in custody at Santa Rita Jail. The Alameda County District Attorney's Office has charged him with battery and a civil rights violation under California Penal Code. If convicted, Harper could face up to one year in county jail.