

# **Durbin, Garcia, Kelly Call On Trump Admin To Immediately Facilitate Access To Legal Orientation Program To All Ice Detainees In Illinois**

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SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee, along with U.S. Representatives Jesús “Chuy” García (D-IL-04) and Robin Kelly (D-IL-02) today called on the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to work together to immediately facilitate access to the Legal Orientation Program (LOP), including meaningful remote access, to all ICE detainees in Illinois. LOP seeks to educate detained individuals in deportation proceedings so they can make more informed decisions, thus increasing efficiencies in the immigration court and detention processes.

“LOP is currently funded at a higher level than in previous years, and the number of detainees currently in ICE custody is far lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic began. It is apparent that EOIR has the capacity to expand LOP access to new facilities,” the members wrote in a letter to EOIR Director James McHenry and ICE Deputy Director Matthew Albence.

Created in 2003, LOP informs more than 50,000 detained non-citizens every year about their legal rights and responsibilities and improves the efficiency of immigration courts. In 2018, when the Trump Administration [tried to halt](#) this effective program, all House and Senate Judiciary Democrats [pushed back strongly](#) against this attempt to undermine due process.

Congress has strongly supported LOP on a bipartisan, bicameral basis and increased its funding. In the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020, Congress appropriated \$18 million for services provided by LOP, including \$3 million for the Immigration Help Desk, and directed EOIR to “continue all LOP services and activities without interruption, including during any review of the program.”

Full text of the letter is available [here](#) and below:

August 25, 2020

Dear Director McHenry and Deputy Director Albence:

We urge you to expeditiously facilitate access to the Legal Orientation Program (LOP) to all detention facilities in Illinois where U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainees are held.

Congress has emphatically rejected efforts by the Trump Administration to discredit LOP and reduce its funding. In fact, Congress has strongly supported LOP on a bipartisan, bicameral basis and increased its funding. In the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116–93), Congress appropriated \$18 million for services provided by LOP, including \$3 million for the Immigration Help Desk, and directed the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) to “continue all LOP services and activities without interruption, including during any review of the program.”

The House Appropriations Committee has strongly supported expanded access to LOP and has found that, “LOP improves the efficiency of court proceedings, reduces court costs, and helps ensure fairness and due process.” The Senate Appropriations Committee has likewise emphasized that, “LOP benefits taxpayers by increasing the efficiency of immigration proceedings and reducing costs related to immigration detention” and has directed EOIR to pay attention to geographic equity as LOP expands, noting the particular need for legal services at more remote immigration detention centers.

LOP is currently funded at a higher level than in previous years, and the number of detainees currently in ICE custody is far lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic began. It is apparent that EOIR has the capacity to expand LOP access to new facilities.

We urge EOIR and ICE to work together to immediately facilitate LOP access, including meaningful remote access, to all ICE detainees in Illinois.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,