

# THE IMMIGRANT ADVOCATE

TEACHING, INTERPRETING, AND CHANGING LAW SINCE 1979



WINTER

2025

## MESSAGE FROM THE ILRC

ALLISON DAVENPORT & CAROLINA CASTAÑEDA



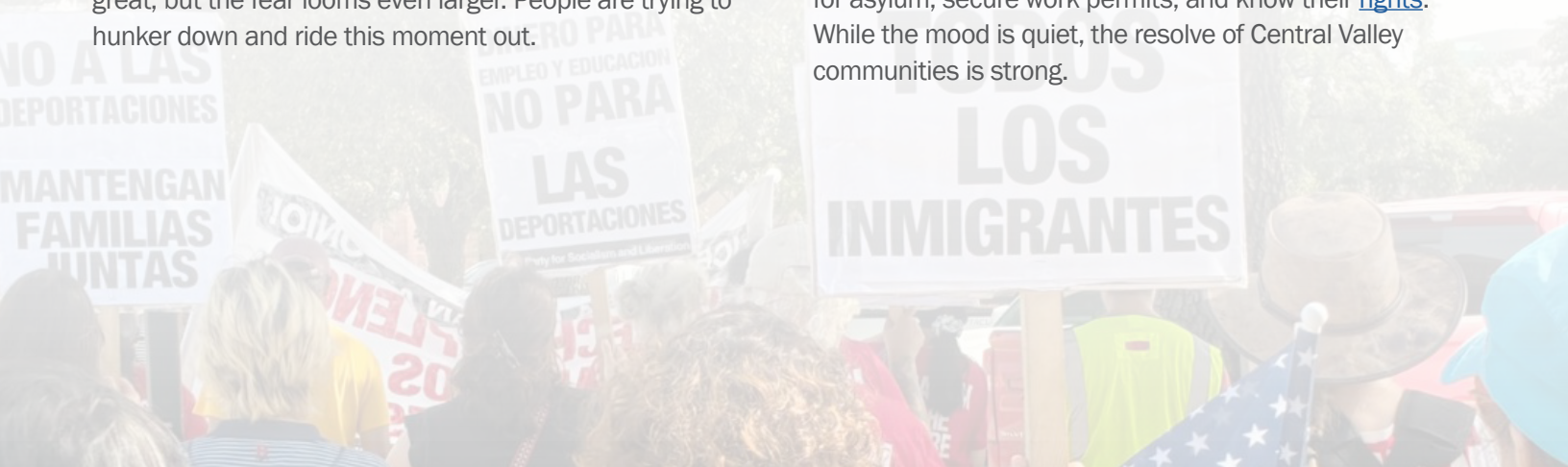
### January 2025

saw immigration sweeps in the southern Central Valley in which unlawful searches and arrests by Customs & Border Patrol (CBP) agents resulted in the detention of 78 local residents. At the time, the aggressive tactics and number of arrests were shocking. Since then, immigration enforcement has reached unprecedented levels and the scenes from Los Angeles made clear to the ILRC, advocates, and community groups on the ground that the January raids had only been a preview of things to come.

Central Valley immigrant families are navigating these uncertain times with caution and resilience—pushing forward, managing their daily lives, and trying to protect their loved ones. The atmosphere is reminiscent of the COVID-19 pandemic. People are staying close to home and avoiding large gatherings. Kids play soccer on the weekends but there are fewer relatives cheering them on. A once thriving small party rental business reports a sharp decline in business. A school that hosted 100 parents for an ILRC Know Your Rights event in January saw only a dozen families turn out for an ILRC Immigration Forum in September. The need for information and guidance is great, but the fear looms even larger. People are trying to hunker down and ride this moment out.

But unlike the pandemic, this threat is manufactured to divide communities along citizenship, race, and ethnicity. In the most conservative pockets of the Central Valley, the divide is palpable. In the southernmost corner of the region, a new for-profit immigration detention facility in California City recently opened. While ILRC's enforcement team is fighting approval of its official licensing, the facility is poised to be the state's largest, with capacity to hold approximately 2,500 people.

Against this backdrop, the hard work of the ILRC and its partners continues in offices and communities across the region. A lawsuit, [\*UFW, et al. v. Noem, et al.\*](#), filed in response to the January raids resulted in a court order prohibiting CBP from conducting unconstitutional stops in the region. Rapid Response networks have been activated and expanded to respond to enforcement and support impacted families. Legal capacity in the region, bolstered by the [Immigration Legal Fellowship Project](#), is still far behind demand but stronger than ever before. ILRC staff continue to assist our partners in their important work of helping people renew DACA, become citizens, apply for asylum, secure work permits, and know their [rights](#). While the mood is quiet, the resolve of Central Valley communities is strong.





# RED CARDS UPDATE

Our democracy is only as strong as the pillars of constitutional rights that can be accessed by marginalized communities. As we face an onslaught of attacks against our foundational values for a free and just society, the need to expand materials that inform immigrants on these legal protections has become a priority at the ILRC.

Our Red Cards are a perfect example of how we've been working to fortify immigrants' understanding that, regardless of their status, they are protected by the founding document of this country. Since its inception in 2008, our Red Card program has popularized the utmost important amendments related to enforcement apprehensions: the right to remain silent, and the right to due process for all.

By placing these clear guides on one side of the card in various languages, we have increased the number of people who have access to this understanding. Keeping the other side of the card in English gives immigrants

a tool to provide under the doorstep or via a window to ensure the officer knows that they are aware of the protections granted to them.

At the start of the current administration, we saw a surge of requests for our Red Cards. Given recent escalations in immigration enforcement, the need for these small but mighty cards became ever clearer to those impacted. We met the moment by increasing the number of available Red Card languages from 16 to 52, ensuring that as many people from all walks of life can have the basic understanding of how the constitution protects them in these dire times.

There continues to be demand for the cards to be in more languages, and we have a dedicated team working to update and enhance them. We believe this wallet-sized tool is one way to continue fortifying the forces that keep our democracy intact, even in the face of authoritarian tactics.



## RED CARDS: THE POCKET-SIZED CARD PROTECTING IMMIGRANTS SINCE 2006

The Red Card was created by former ILRC lawyer Mark Silverman. Silverman, who retired in 2018, came up with the idea in 2008 in the wake of increased immigration raids at workplaces across the country. Modeled after the eject card in soccer, the Red Card is a wallet-sized tool for immigrants to know and assert their rights.

### TOP 5 STATES RED CARDS HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED IN OVER TIME:

1. California
2. New York
3. Texas
4. Massachusetts
5. Oregon

### TOP 5 MOST REQUESTED LANGUAGES SINCE THE RED CARD'S INCEPTION:

1. Spanish (12,719,041)
2. English (2,679,400)
3. Arabic (369,675)
4. Haitian Creole (344,200)
5. Chinese (341,150)

*The ILRC has distributed over ten million Red Cards since the 2024 election alone.*



# Moving Texas Forward

## IMMIGRATION WINS IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

### LAREDO

In her role as Texas Organizer with the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, Ilse Hernandez focuses on building long-term resiliency in immigrant communities through education, relationship-building, and creative community engagement. Her work is deeply informed by the ILRC's Border Report, which documents the systemic challenges facing immigrants in border regions and emphasizes the urgent need for locally grounded, community-led responses.

Ilse coordinates and facilitates Know-Your-Rights workshops that equip directly impacted communities with the knowledge needed to navigate interactions with immigration enforcement and assert their rights. These workshops not only provide critical legal information but also foster trust, leadership, and shared responsibility within communities. Ilse is actively cultivating coalition spaces that bring together grassroots organizers, local advocates, educators, and healthcare workers to

respond collectively to the challenges facing immigrant communities. These cross-sector partnerships allow for the sharing of resources, alignment of strategies, and the creation of holistic, community-driven solutions.

By bringing together many different community members, Ilse facilitates co-created solutions rooted in local realities. One recent example is a community mural project developed in partnership with local artists and residents. Another is the legal consultation clinics that are supporting this rural area with community partners.

To strengthen and expand this work, the ILRC recently welcomed a Laredo-based policy attorney. This new role will deepen statewide advocacy efforts and ensure that legal strategies are responsive to community needs and grounded in on-the-ground realities. Through a combination of legal education, collaborative partnerships, and cultural organizing, the ILRC's Laredo-based team's work contributes to a broader vision of community resilience, one that uplifts local voices, nurtures grassroots leadership, and builds collective power across sectors.



# HOUSTON

Despite an increasingly hostile political climate in Texas, wins from groups like [Houston Leads](#) show that local organizing campaigns can still protect communities from rising immigration enforcement. Houston Leads is a coalition of [over 30](#) member-based, advocacy, and service providing organizations, plus individual members. Since 2018, the ILRC has intentionally invested in providing our coalition partners with legal advocacy, strategy guidance, and capacity building. The coalition has secured multiple Harris County [policies and programs](#) that ultimately decrease the deportations of our community members and increase access to public services that otherwise would leave them out.

After a multi-year organizing campaign, the Harris County Sheriff's Office finally agreed in August 2024 to accept the [Harris County Enhanced Library Card](#) (ELC), which includes a photo and date of birth, as a secondary identity document. This means that in certain interactions with law enforcement, verifying identity by providing an ELC can now protect a community member from being brought to jail, where they are at increased risk of transfer to ICE custody.

Additionally, along with criminal justice partners, Houston Leads has organized each year for the Harris County budget to invest in programs that prioritize social services and decrease criminalization of community members, such as the [Holistic Assistance Response Team \(HART\)](#). HART, which sends mental health professionals instead of law enforcement to certain eligible 911 calls, was previously a pilot program but was [approved for county-wide expansion](#) this August.

Finally, in October 2024, Harris County Commissioners Court renewed the [Immigrant Legal Services Fund](#) (ILSF) for its third year and is expected to do so again soon. This funding, [originally won by Houston Leads in 2020](#), provides attorneys to County residents detained in four Houston-area ICE detention centers, [significantly increasing their chances](#) of release and winning their case.

These campaign wins demonstrate that when the ILRC and our coalition partners invest in organizing capacity and collaborative strategy, we can protect local immigrant communities, even under an extremely hostile political climate. In 2026, the ILRC will continue to strengthen and expand local coalition work to safeguard local protections despite ongoing state and federal attacks.



# *In Memoriam*



## **The ILRC mourns the passing of former ILRC board member and immigrant rights advocate, Lee Zeigler.**

Lee served on the ILRC's Board of Directors before retiring in July 2014. His dedication to immigrant rights and his thoughtful guidance as a Board member helped to grow the ILRC's programs and services to protect and defend immigrant communities in California and beyond. After he retired, he and his wife, Peggy, remained connected to the ILRC, and they were generous supporters of our work.

Lee's interest in immigration issues arose from his work at Stanford's International House (now the Bechtel International Center). He knew Don Ungar, former ILRC Board member and longtime ILRC trainer and advocate. He joined the ILRC's board because of his connection to Nora Privatera, former ILRC Staff Attorney. He was sophisticated and brilliant, lending his wisdom and support not just to the ILRC, but to various music, arts, and culture organizations. He believed in making his community better and stronger by taking an active role in what interested him. The ILRC will miss his dedication and commitment. Thank you for all you have done to help immigrants and their families, Lee.



## **ILRC Advisory Board member John Burton was a giant on California's political scene since the mid-60s.**

He served in many public office roles, including as the 47th president pro tempore of the California State Senate. Senator Burton was known for his unfiltered and blunt communication style as much as he was known for his impassioned advocacy of the underserved from San Francisco and beyond.

Senator Burton was Phillip Burton's brother, and Senator Burton helped the ILRC create the Phillip Burton Immigration & Civil Rights Awards, the ILRC's annual awards dinner event, in 1989. Senator Burton was presented with the 2004 Phillip Burton Award for Lifetime Achievement in Immigration & Civil Rights. He will be remembered by the ILRC as a staunch champion of immigrant and civil rights.





The ILRC has many who have championed immigrant rights throughout its 46-year history. We are saddened to share the following recent passings of former Executive Director Susan Lydon, former Board of Directors member Lee Zeigler, and Advisory Board member John Burton. We thank these fierce advocates for their contributions to the ILRC and to the immigrant rights field.

### **The ILRC fondly remembers the life and legacy of our former Executive Director, Susan Lydon.**

She was a brilliant and exceptional leader who combined storied legal expertise with a great sense of humor and a deep compassion for people, especially the underserved, to benefit the immigrant rights movement.

Susan attended UC Berkeley School of Law and graduated top of her class. There, she began a long friendship with Kathy Brady, whom she later recruited to join her at ILRC and who is currently Directing Attorney.

ILRC founder Professor Bill Ong Hing met Susan when she was a 3L at UC Berkeley. Back then, she worked with Bill as a volunteer at the small immigration clinic at Golden Gate University that would later become the ILRC. Bill recalls that Susan was the first employee he hired for the ILRC. Susan clerked for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and then took some rare time off to travel to Asia and India, but Hing was determined to recruit her back to the ILRC. He said, "I tracked her down in Tibet or Kathmandu. She got my message. She called me from the Himalayas." He held the job open for months until she returned. He recognized that among her many great qualities she was a deep, analytical legal writer and thinker.

First as the Assistant Director then as the Executive Director, Susan established a strong organizational foundation and insistence on clear and concise legal analysis at the ILRC. That foundation endures as does her pioneering immigration legal work in such Supreme Court victories as *INS v. Cardoza-Fonseca*, where the Court held

that the standard for qualifying for asylum is more lenient than preponderance of the evidence, and *United States v. Mendoza-Lopez*, where the Court held that an immigrant who is charged in federal court with illegally re-entering the United States following a deportation can attack the validity of the underlying deportation order in the criminal trial. About the *Cardoza-Fonseca* decision, Brady shared, "Judge [Dana] Marks brilliantly argued that case before the Supreme Court, while Susan was the chief editor, author, and strategist on the brief. The Court put a lot of the language that she authored directly into the opinion."

Hing recalls, "Susan was one of the most pleasant, soft-spoken individuals to work with. She was brilliant, very smart, and dedicated to the community. Everyone loved her." Current ILRC Executive Director Eric Cohen remembers Susan as, "...the best legal writer. She had an amazing legal mind, especially when it came to legal writing, legal analysis, and legal research." She is also remembered as a humble leader and a fierce advocate for immigrant rights.

The ILRC and the immigrant rights movement is better and stronger for having had Susan as a staunch champion and advocate.



A photograph of a man in a suit speaking at a podium with two microphones. The background is filled with many lit white candles, creating a warm and formal atmosphere. The image is overlaid with a dark blue gradient.

# 2025 BURTON AWARDS: CELEBRATING TOGETHER

The ILRC welcomed supporters and allies of the immigrant rights field to celebrate the 2025 Phillip Burton Immigration & Civil Rights Awards on Thursday, May 22. Held at the Hotel Nikko in downtown San Francisco, over 325 people gathered to recognize the achievements of this year's honorees: California Padilla Defenders, recipients of the Phillip Burton Award for Lawyering, and Congressman Adriano Espaillat, recipient of the Nancy Pelosi Award for Policy.

In her introduction of the California Padilla Defenders, ILRC Staff Attorney, Lena Graber said, "We are so pleased to offer to honor the Padilla defenders tonight because they are incredible legal scholars, indefatigable fighters, and committed advocates who have directly prevented the deportation of countless immigrants in the state of California." Rachael Keast accepted on behalf of the Padilla Defenders and recognized ILRC Directing Attorney, Kathy Brady, in her remarks. "[Kathy Brady] has always, always been on our side to get the support, the resources we need to do the work we need for our clients. I feel like she is the sunlight that keeps us growing and thriving, so we love you, Kathy. Thank you so much."

We were delighted to welcome ILRC's Advisory Board member Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi to the event, where she introduced and presented Congressman Espaillat with the award bearing her name. She regaled the audience with tales of Phillip Burton and ILRC Founder Professor Bill Ong Hing in the early days of her affiliation with the ILRC. She encouraged the attendees to continue making their voices heard and to fight for the preservation and expansion of our collective rights.

The evening culminated with a moving performance by keynote speaker, Irma Herrera, lawyer, playwright, writer, stand-up comic, and feminist. Her personal and relatable accounts of racism and anti-immigrant sentiments from early in her career reminded us that we must be vigilant and rooted in our convictions to persevere against the assault on human, civil, and immigrant rights.

Thank you to our generous event sponsors and to all who attended to make our 2025 Burton Awards another inspiring event. Save the date for our 2026 Burton Awards event on Thursday, May 21, 2026!

*For more information about the 2026 Burton Awards, contact [development@ilrc.org](mailto:development@ilrc.org).*





# Thank You!

BY CYNTHIA TIRADO HOUSEL

One of my childhood heroes is Fred Rogers, aka Mr. Rogers from *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. Mr. Rogers is often quoted for something his mother used to tell him in dark or scary times: *"Look for the helpers."*

**You are the helpers.** Your support of the ILRC helps us to push back against the current administration's blatant terror campaign against immigrants and people of color. Since 1979, the ILRC has committed to working with and educating immigrants, community organizations, and the legal sector to help build a democratic society that values diversity and the rights of all people.

Thank you for all you have done this year to support our work – from your financial contributions, to amplifying our messages on social media, to disseminating red cards. Your help means that we can respond quickly and pivot when needed to analyze the ever-changing immigration law landscape and produce manuals, trainings, and videos to educate and inform our vast audiences of the law and their rights. **We cannot do this work without you.**

As a career development professional, I am honored to use my skills to support the ILRC's mission to protect and defend immigrants and their families so that they can stay together in this country and thrive. It is my privilege to

extend the ILRC's sincerest appreciation for all that you do to help us in our work. Your partnership and investment in us mean that we can resist the maelstrom of racist, nativist, and xenophobic tactics hurled at immigrant communities. With you on our side, we believe that a world that honors the dignity and strength of immigrants is in our future.

This work has never been easy, but it is especially brutal now. Many of you stood alongside us during the first Trump administration as we marshalled our internal expertise to partner with directly impacted community members and like-minded organizations. Because of your commitment then, we collectively resisted the onslaught of roadblocks to fair and just immigration policy. Your continued investment and votes of confidence in us during 2025 keep us moving forward.

We have a long road ahead, and please know that the ILRC will continue to respond and resist. We have you to thank for our ability to endure these dark and scary times. **Your role as helper has never been more important.** Together, we will remind this administration and this country what can be accomplished when we unite for a greater good.

Cynthia Tirado Housel  
Director of Leadership Giving

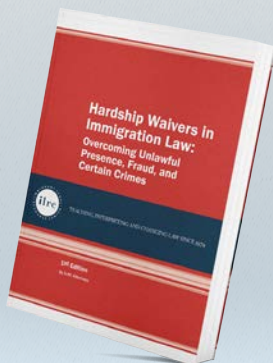


# UPDATED PUBLICATIONS

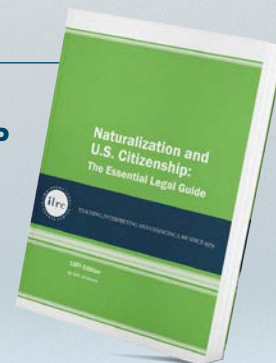


In 1984, the ILRC published its first manual. Since then, the ILRC has been providing essential practical guides for legal practitioners. All publications are produced by the ILRC's expert immigration attorneys. Revenue from the ILRC publications helps support critical programs in the community.

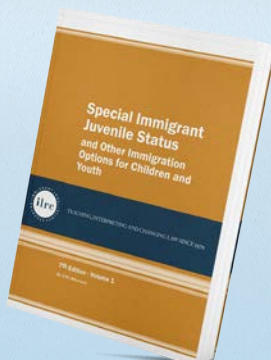
To learn about these titles and view our entire catalog, visit [WWW.ILRC.ORG/STORE](http://WWW.ILRC.ORG/STORE)



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Legal Guide*  
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JUVENILE STATUS &  
Other Immigration Options  
for Children & Youth**  
**7<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**



ILRC publications bring clarity to complicated issues. Save time. Win more cases.

## THE ILRC IS DELIGHTED TO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW STAFF TO THE TEAM:

**Emma Stallworthy**

Grants & Database Coordinator

**Maddie Boyd**

Staff Attorney  
Crim/Imm & PCR

**Lisa Sousa**

Grants Manager

**Ashar Akhtar**

General Counsel

**Vanessa Hatfield**

Project Manager

**Thania Barragan-Torres**

Customer Experience &  
Publications Associate

**Jared Marling**

Training Manager

**Karen Munoz Trevino**

Texas Policy Attorney & Strategist

**Mia Nakano**

Director of Technology

# ILRC ONLINE: MORE FOLLOWERS THAN EVER!

The total audience growth for the ILRC's social media this year so far has **increased 68.9%**!

Our total audience is **148,484**, compared to 87,915 from the previous 8 months, making our Net Audience Growth 60,739. From January to September 2025, our net audience growth for each platform is the following:

**3,813**  
NEW FOLLOWERS  
[linkedin.com/company/immigrant-legal-resource-center](https://linkedin.com/company/immigrant-legal-resource-center)



**44,872**  
NEW FOLLOWERS  
[@the\\_ilrc](https://the_ilrc)

**3,205**  
NEW FOLLOWERS  
[facebook.com/immigrantlegalresourcecenter](https://facebook.com/immigrantlegalresourcecenter)



**8,640**  
NEW FOLLOWERS  
[@the\\_ilrc](https://the_ilrc)

THE ILRC ALSO OPENED  
A BLUESKY ACCOUNT:  
[the-ilrc.bsky.social](https://the-ilrc.bsky.social)



**209**  
NEW FOLLOWERS  
[@the\\_ilrc](https://the_ilrc)

If you don't already follow us, find us online!

## 14 YEARS OF IMPACT AND SUCCESS

OVER

**691,000**

naturalization applications  
completed since July 2011

OVER

**\$775,000,000**

saved for aspiring citizens and their families  
in legal and application fees

OVER

**256,000**

fee waivers and reduced fee requests  
completed since July 2011

OVER

**12,400**

naturalization events held since July 2011, including  
naturalization information sessions, volunteer  
trainings, and group application workshops

Led by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, the *New Americans Campaign* is a diverse nonpartisan national network of respected immigration organizations, legal services providers, faith-based organizations, immigrant rights groups, foundations, and community leaders. The Campaign transforms the way aspiring citizens navigate the path to becoming new Americans. It is committed to connecting lawful permanent residents to trusted legal assistance and critical information that simplifies the naturalization process.



[WWW.NEWAMERICANSCAMPAIGN.ORG](https://WWW.NEWAMERICANSCAMPAIGN.ORG)



## In this issue...

- Red Cards: Protecting Immigrants Since 2006
- Texas Updates from Laredo & Houston
- 2025 Burton Awards: Celebrating Together
- and more!



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## SUPPORT OUR WORK!

The ILRC is a national nonprofit at the forefront of promoting and defending immigrant rights. We believe immigrants share a common vision with all Americans: a productive, happy, and healthy life for themselves and their families.

Join a community of funders who are committed to the ILRC's mission to work with and educate immigrants, community organizations, and the legal sector to continue to build a democratic society that values diversity and the rights of all people.

### Make your gift today by:

- Using the envelope provided in this newsletter
- Visiting [www.ilrc.org/donate-now](http://www.ilrc.org/donate-now) to make a donation online
- Visiting our [More Ways to Give](#) page to learn about additional ways to support the ILRC

**ILRC.ORG/DONATE-NOW**

**Your gift will support the ILRC  
and the immigrant community.**

**Questions?** Contact Development at [development@ilrc.org](mailto:development@ilrc.org).

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