



IMMIGRATION LEGAL NEEDS AND ACCESS GAPS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Briefing on the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission Impact Report | June 11, 2026

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STATE BAR-FUNDED IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES

71 State Bar-funded organizations

provide immigration legal services, helping people in California obtain work authorization, secure legal status, seek release from immigration custody, and pursue citizenship.

Between 2020–2025, an average of 15 State Bar-funded organizations provided immigration legal services in Los Angeles county, resulting in:



31,962 immigration cases closed.



3,257 deportations prevented.



34,666 people in households helped.



902 people obtained asylum.

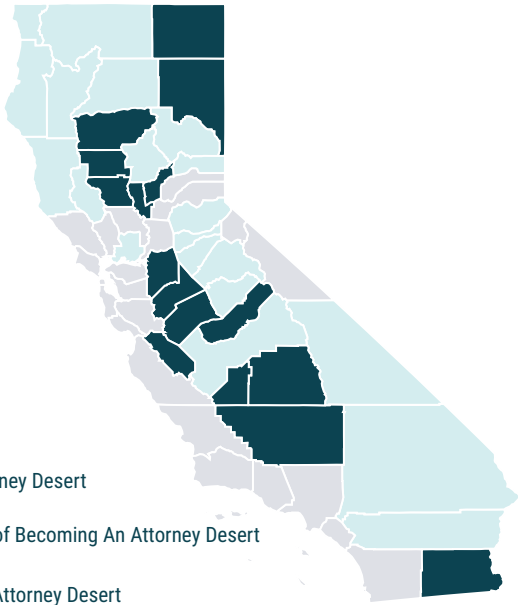


\$784,707 in monthly benefits won and over **\$1.64M** saved in reduced fees.



1,830 clients obtained lawful permanent residency.

CALIFORNIA'S ATTORNEY DESERTS AND JUSTICE GAP



- **73 percent** of California residents experienced at least one civil legal problem in the past year.
- **85 percent** of legal problems received no or inadequate legal help.
- **16 California counties are attorney deserts**—counties with fewer than 1 active attorney per every 1,000 residents.
- **Only 24 percent of attorneys serve individual clients**, limiting access to legal help.

IMMIGRATION-SPECIFIC GAPS



Immigration legal capacity building takes time, particularly for removal defense, which requires extensive training and specialized expertise.



Immigration cases are often complex, resource-intensive, and may last for years, contributing to high rates of burnout.

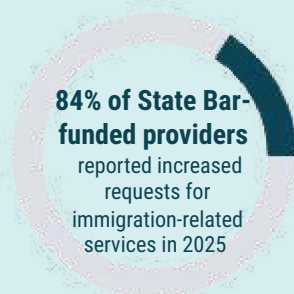
IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY DESERTS IN LOS ANGELES AND NEIGHBORING COUNTIES

COUNTY	FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION	# IMMIGRATION ATTORNEYS (AVVO)	TOTAL ACTIVE ATTORNEYS	% IMMIGRATION ATTORNEYS	IMMIGRATION ATTORNEYS PER FOREIGN-BORN POP.
Los Angeles	3.26M	1,506	59,097	2.5%	1:2,165
Kern	186,351	16	828	1.9%	1:11,647
Orange	963,812	501	18,618	2.7%	1:1,924
San Bernardino	478,285	88	2,396	3.7%	1:5,435
Ventura	185,465	53	2,794	1.9%	1:3,499



LEGAL SERVICES: NEEDS AND OBSTACLES

- Immigration-related problems are the most common issue for which people in California seek legal help.



- For some providers, **removal defense requests doubled** following policy changes in early 2025.
- Fear of deportation has discouraged some immigrants from seeking legal help, including for urgent problems.

PRESSURES ON CALIFORNIA'S IMMIGRATION INFRASTRUCTURE

- From 2024–2025, **removal orders increased 57 percent**, while **asylum approval rates fell to 7 percent** of cases.
- **Immigration filings increased 106 percent** in the Southern District of California during the 2025 federal fiscal year.
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) **arrested at least 14,302 individuals in the greater Los Angeles Area**—nearly 10,000 more than in 2024.
- Some immigration attorneys have reduced their removal defense work because of increasing case complexity.
- **Immigration case timelines have shifted even further toward extremes:**
 - Expedited hearings for detained persons agreeing to deportation, longer waits for individuals contesting removal;
 - Protracted fraud vetting for applicants from countries subject to the travel ban;
 - Major restrictions on eligibility for individuals to be released on bond;
 - Increase to already massive backlog for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and U Visas;
 - The DOJ's new Interim Final Rule (8 CFR Parts 1003, 1208, and 1240) effective March 9, 2026, requires notices of appeal to be filed within 10 days, with limited exceptions for asylum. The rule also allows the Board of Immigration Appeals to summarily dismiss by default many cases.

CURRENT STATE BAR IMMIGRATION PROJECTS

RESEARCH

Research and analysis on common legal problems that overlap with immigration needs to better identify and target appropriate interventions.

EXPLORATION

Exploring regional coordinated immigration intake and other ways to support coordinated immigration legal services.

ADVOCACY

Advocating for funding to support holistic legal services for immigrants and grow the immigration attorney pipeline.

IMPACT LITIGATION SPOTLIGHT

Vasquez Perdomo v. Noem

Following an immigration enforcement in Southern California in 2025, five individuals filed a lawsuit challenging alleged racially discriminatory practices by the Department of Homeland Security.

The plaintiffs are represented by two State Bar-funded organizations—Public Counsel and Immigrant Defenders Law Center—along with several partner organizations.

The case demonstrates how legal aid organizations use impact litigation to address issues affecting entire communities.

RECENT ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT PROJECTS (2025)

Advocacy for Additional Legal Aid Funding

Successfully advocated and secured \$10M additional Equal Access Funds to help address growing demand for immigration legal services.

Convenings

Hosted five convenings in to support State Bar-funded organizations amidst policy and funding changes.

Convenings included a focus on immigration legal needs and providing holistic legal support to immigrant and mixed-status families.

