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SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM
AND INTELLIGENCE

February 05, 2026

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 200

Dear Secretary Noem:

We write to express grave concerns over recent reports that federal law enforcement agents operating under the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”), including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (“CBP”), have been evading state transportation laws by removing, exchanging, or misusing license plates.

As you are aware, each state and territory in the United States dictates how vehicles must register and display license plates. For example, Illinois law requires all persons operating a vehicle to have a registered license plate and prohibits manipulating any evidence of vehicle registration.¹ New York law similarly prohibits obscuring, concealing, or distorting license plates on vehicles.² In California, license plates must be securely fastened to the vehicle the plates are issued to, mounted in an upright position, and maintained in a condition that is clearly legible at all times.³ DHS has also previously established its own guidelines for displaying license plates. Under its Asset and Facilities Management Guidelines, DHS has required that “[a]ll ICE owned, or leased motor vehicles must display DHS or GSA plates unless exempted.”⁴

As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Homeland Security Committee, Congress plays a vital role in keeping our roads safe and ensuring that federal officers follow the law. Recent reports indicate that while executing Operation Midway Blitz, ICE and CBP have been swapping or removing license plates on vehicles they are using in violation of Illinois state law. Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias notified the ICE Director that ICE agents had improperly swapped license plates, prompting him to revoke the

¹ 625 Ill. Code. § 5/3-413(b); *id.* § 5/4-104(a)(4) (noting that it is a violation “to display or affix to a vehicle any certificate of title, manufacturer's statement of origin, salvage certificate, junking certificate, display certificate, temporary registration permit, registration card, license plate or digital license plate, or registration sticker or digital registration sticker not authorized by law for use on such vehicle”).

² 34 R.C.N.Y. § 4-08(j)(10) (2025).

³ Cal. Veh. Code § 5201(a) (2025).

⁴ ICE Fleet Management Handbook, ch. 11. § 2.7 (citing exceptions should be requested and submitted to the Fleet Management Unit) www.documentcloud.org/documents/26196711-ice-motor-vehicle-fleet-management-guidelines/?mode=document#document/p8/a2675435.

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registration of a 2026 Chevrolet Tahoe used by federal agents and owned by a private rental company.⁵ ICE's actions in Illinois are no exception. The Minnesota Director of Driver and Vehicle Services, Pong Xiong, similarly wrote to you after reported incidents showing DHS was changing and removing Minnesota license plates assigned to DHS vehicles.⁶ ICE's actions raise serious issues about how the agency and its agents are habitually violating state laws through manipulation of license plates of rented vehicles.

Rental car companies are required to ensure that vehicles in ICE's fleet are properly licensed and that all rental agreements are enforced in compliance with the law. Rental car companies must ensure the safety of travelers and those around them and seek to ensure that those using their vehicles are complying with the applicable laws. This is true regardless of whether the renter is a family using the vehicle to travel for a vacation, a CEO traveling for business, or if the renter is the federal government. In addition to endangering the American public, altering and removing license plates by ICE and CPB on rental vehicles during civil immigration enforcement actions jeopardizes the integrity, reputation, and liability of some of the largest rental car companies operating nationwide.

DHS's failure to comply with state laws regarding properly displaying and maintaining visible license plates is yet another example of the agency's blatant disregard for respect for the rule of law. ICE's and CPB's continued failure to properly identify themselves, paired with their refusal to remove facial masks, has left Americans in fear and uncertainty. **Given the grave public safety risks posed by these actions, I am requesting DHS answer to the following questions no later than March 6, 2026.**

1. Has DHS communicated with rental companies to notify them of each instance in which DHS agents remove, exchange, alter, or otherwise misuse license plates on rental vehicles? If yes, please provide the justification given to the companies for removing, exchanging, altering, or otherwise misusing license plates in a manner that may violate rental or lease contracts or state law. If not, please provide an explanation for not notifying the rental companies.
2. DHS has been repeatedly notified by state officials regarding its failure to comply with state laws regarding the removal and swapping of license plates. Has DHS communicated with state officials regarding its failure to comply with state law regarding the display of license plates on government-owned vehicles or leased or rental vehicles?
 - a. If yes, please provide a copy of the communication as well as any relevant attachments or filings submitted by DHS to the state.
 - b. If no, please provide an explanation for not communicating with state officials.

⁵ Letter from Alexi Giannoulias, Secretary of State, State of Illinois to Todd Lyons, Dir. of Immigr. & Customs Enforcement, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec. (Oct. 23, 2025), <https://acrobot.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:ee1f346a-011a-4749-87d9-b0e244a97a80>; Letter from Letter from Alexi Giannoulias, Secretary of State, State of Illinois to EAN Holdings, LLC, re License Plate Revocation (Nov. 12, 2025), <https://acrobot.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:a6ed17ad-c522-44f6-826e-4673ecf0b91e>.

⁶ Letter from Pong Xiong, Director, Driver & Vehicle Servs., Dep't of Pub. Safety, State of Minnesota, to Kristi Noem, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec., on misuse of license plates on unmarked DHS vehicles (Dec. 23, 2025), www.mprnews.org/story/2025/12/24/ice-agents-in-minnesota-are-violating-state-law-by-switching-license-plates.

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3. Has DHS investigated the claims of ICE or CBP agents removing, exchanging, altering, or otherwise misusing license plates on government-owned vehicles or leased or rental vehicles used in immigration enforcement activities? If yes, please provide:
 - a. The names and positions of individuals at DHS investigating these claims;
 - b. The names and positions of individuals who directed the removal, exchange, alteration, or otherwise misuse of license plates on government-owned vehicles or leased or rental vehicles; and
 - c. What, if any, actions DHS has taken to correct or otherwise remedy the failure to properly comply with state law regarding the display of license plates on rental or leased vehicles.
4. Does DHS have procedures regarding the use of rental or leased vehicles? If yes, please provide all policies, procedures, or guidelines regarding the use of rental or leased vehicles, including but not limited to any policies, guidance, or mandates related to:
 - a. ICE or CBP and their agents with respect to the procurement, contracting, or use of rental or leased vehicles;
 - b. The removal, exchange, alteration, or other misuse of vehicle license plates; and
 - c. The assignment of liability when violations, fines, or impoundment are placed on a rental or leased vehicle.
5. Has DHS updated its ICE Fleet Management Handbook since January 2022?
 - a. If yes, please provide a copy of the updated ICE Fleet Management Handbook and identify what sections have been revised, removed, or added from the previous version, as well as copies of each waiver request and the corresponding waiver decision (granting or denial) beginning from January 20, 2025 to February XX, 2026 and provide the number of times waivers to display were denied and granted.
 - b. If no, has ICE continued its compliance with Ch. 11 Section 2-7, that requires the submission of waivers for license plate display and motor vehicle registration? If it has not, please provide justification for failure to comply with DHS's own federal waiver requirements.
6. Will DHS commit to complying with state law and stop manipulating its fleet license plates while conducting civil immigration enforcement activities?
 - a. If no, please explain DHS's justification for refusing to comply with state law.

Sincerely,


Nellie Pou
Member of Congress
New Jersey's 9th Congressional District

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Cc:

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Office of Asset & Facilities Management
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Yvonne R. Medina
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