

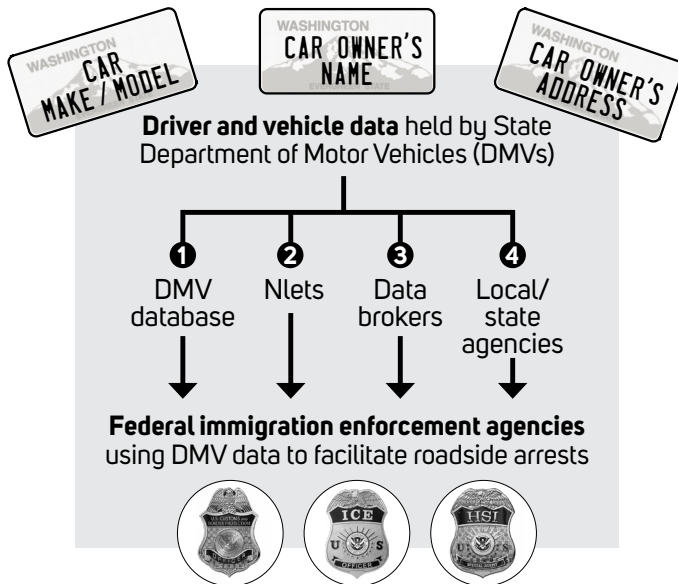
DRIVER AND VEHICLE DATA SHARING: WHAT IS HAPPENING

Across the country, immigration enforcement agencies are making arrests on the roadsides and in parking lots. But how do they know who is in the car in front of them?

In many cases, agents simply search state DMV databases for the license plate number of the car in front of them to determine the name and address of the car's owner.

This is the DMV-to-DHS pipeline.

There are four main ways immigration enforcement agencies access state driver and vehicle data:



DMV database: Many states allow external parties direct access to their DMV data. In some states, ICE and CBP are among those with direct access.

Nlets: ICE/CBP uses Nlets, a national law enforcement data-sharing system that DMVs share data with, to identify people by querying the license plates of cars they see and retrieving information such as name and address of the car's owner.

Data brokers: Many states generate revenue by selling DMV data to data brokers, who in turn package and sell the data to others, including ICE/CBP.

Local/state agencies: State or local law enforcement or agencies with access to DMV data could search the data on ICE/CBP's behalf.

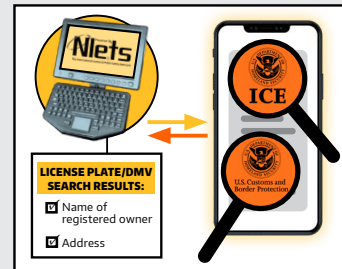
HOW NLETS WORKS



1. ICE/CBP surveil communities: ICE and CBP agents surveil locations where they expect to find undocumented residents, or target vehicles they deem suspicious.



2. ICE/CBP search license plates in state DMV data via Nlets: Agents run license plate numbers in Nlets, obtaining information from state DMVs—including name, address, vehicle registration information, and more.



3. ICE/CBP cross-reference data: Obtaining someone's name from DMV data is often enough for ICE/CBP to cross-reference their own databases to determine someone's immigration status.



4. ICE/CBP make an arrest: Agents can then proceed to arrest the driver while in traffic, or travel to their registered address to arrest them on a subsequent day.

PROTECTING WASHINGTON DATA



Washington state has laws limiting data sharing for the purposes of immigration enforcement. But yet, this pathway remains open. Washington could block all immigration enforcement agencies from accessing DOL data without a warrant or court order, but they have not.

Currently, ICE/CBP access to WA DOL data via Nlets continues. From Aug 2025 to October 13, 2026, researchers at the UWCHR have **confirmed 356 cases** in Washington state in which ICE/CBP agents have used Nlets to retrieve information from WA DOL prior to making an immigration arrest.

STOPPING THE DMV-TO-DHS DATA PIPELINE

VEHICLE AND DRIVER DATA SHARING WITH FEDERAL IMMIGRATION AGENCIES

October 2026

tinyurl.com/DMV2DHS

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RACIAL PROFILING:

ICE/CBP testimony shown below describes agents going to a Home Depot, looking up cars' license plate numbers in DMV data, racially profiling names of listed car owners, cross-referencing in their own databases, and then carrying out arrests.

A. Yes. We ended up at a Home Depot there.
Q. Okay. And how did you end up there?
A. I don't remember what made us decide to go there. I think we were in the area looking for another target, and then we just ended up getting into the parking lot there and observing people around us there.

Q. What did you do exactly when you arrived in the parking lot?

A. Drove around just looking for suspicious vehicles and whatnot. You know, typical ones that targets that we usually find.

And so, anyway, I ended up running through the parking lot, found several license plates, and started running them through our databases.

Q. At some point did you run the license plate of a blue Chevrolet Silverado?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. What did you learn when you ran that license plate?

A. I learned that it did come back to a Hispanic male. And I say Hispanic based off the name, anyway. And so, you know, whenever I do find a name, I usually -- there's certain things that we can look for that there might be missing markers and whatnot on the registration.

U.S.A. vs. Luis-Azamar, July 14, 2026.

"JUMP OUT" CAR ARREST:

The term "jump out" refers to a practice in which multiple unmarked vehicles, sometimes lacking license plates, suddenly surround a target while driving, and unidentifiable officers leap from the car to confront its driver with overwhelming force. While ICE/CBP didn't invent the tactic, its use at scale in immigration enforcement is new, and raises human rights and constitutional questions about racial profiling, due process, and the use of force.

Multiple federal judges have commented on how terrifying these arrests can be: in one case from Massachusetts, Judge Brian Murphy ordered the release of a person who had initially fled from the to the violent behavior from federal immigration agents.

Finally, the Court notes that even under Petitioner's account, in which Petitioner does not dispute initially fleeing from the vehicle stop, such flight is insufficient to support a flight risk finding for the purposes of a bond determination. Indeed, this Court finds it eminently reasonable to flee out of fear under the circumstances as described by Petitioner, which one might understandably perceive to be a carjacking rather than a measured law enforcement action. See *United States v. Gonzalez-Ochoa*, No. 25-cr-00080, Dkt. 39, at *2-3 (S.D. Iowa Dec. 22, 2025) ("[T]he Government did not meet its burden of proving a serious risk that Gonzalez-Ochoa will flee. . . . [A]lthough the Government alleged that Gonzalez-Ochoa 'fled' from ICE officers, the Government could not prove that those officers, who were in plain clothes, ever identified themselves to Gonzalez-Ochoa as [sic] ICE agents when they showed up at his place of employment. Thus, at most, the evidence shows that Gonzalez-Ochoa 'fled' from a group of unidentified strangers who did not appear to be law enforcement agents." (citation omitted)).

Eleandro Almeida De Souza v. David Wesling, et al., Sept 11, 2026.



STOPPING THE DMV-TO-DHS PIPELINE REQUIRES ADDRESSING ALL FOUR PATHWAYS OF DATA ACCESS

States have the right to—and responsibility to—determine how their DMV data is, or is not, shared. Protecting state data requires action on all four pathways of the DMV-to-DHS pipeline: directly through database access; through the interstate querying system known as Nlets; through sale to data brokers, who may in turn sell it to ICE/CBP; and through local law enforcement who pass data to ICE/CBP.

Protecting our data and our residents requires effective mechanisms for accountability and transparency so that any future violations are detected, and those responsible are held accountable.