

GOVERNMENT

New Yorkers Kicked Out Of Trusted Traveler Program Because DHS Is Petty AF

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By LORELEI LAIRD

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It's Pettiness Month in the Trump administration! ATL readers who do not live under rocks are undoubtedly aware of the headline pettiness, in which our only president [fired people](#) for testifying accurately against him (or in one case, for being related to someone who did). But if you don't live in New York, you may have missed some immigration-specific pettiness: Because New York made a law limiting the Department of Homeland Security's access to driver's license records, New Yorkers are no longer eligible for DHS's Trusted

The New York law in question is called the "green light" law, and its main purpose is to let undocumented immigrants apply for driver's licenses. But another provision in the bill forbids the New York DMV from sharing its records with an immigration enforcement agency without a warrant or court order, and therein lies the "problem." DHS, in a letter to



IV, says New Yorkers are now canceled because the green light law “prevents DHS accessing relevant information that only [the] New York DMV maintains.”



This alleged importance of driver’s license records came as a surprise to anyone who has applied for Trusted Traveler status, which [does not require a driver’s license](#). Applicants’ criminal records are checked through the FBI, which is not a branch of the New York DMV. The DHS letter does, however, mention that Immigration and Customs Enforcement uses DMV records to verify identities and look up criminal histories. Indeed, ICE is [fighting New York City](#) in court for information about four former inmates who are immigrants, after the city refused to honor detainer requests under its sanctuary city ordinance.

That gave Gov. Andrew Cuomo some ideas about DHS’s real motives; last Friday, he [called it](#) “extortion” and “an abuse of power in a hyper-politicized government.” That impression was bolstered by Acting USCIS Director and [breast-phobe](#) Ken Cuccinelli, who on Thursday [threatened](#) the state of Washington with similar treatment if it passes a similar bill it’s considering. Not surprisingly, New York Attorney General Letitia James [sued DHS](#) on Monday, alleging equal protection and statutory violations, and Cuomo [plans to meet with Trump](#) Thursday to discuss it.

Lest you think the “Trusted Traveler ban” is merely an annoyance for rich Manhattanites, please recall that Buffalo is on the *other* border—you know, the one everyone ignores because white people are on both sides of it. Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown pointed that out in [a Feb. 7 letter](#) to DHS, asking “the party of fiscal responsibility” to reconsider before it breaks Buffalo’s heavily border-dependent economy. In an election year, economic issues are supposed to matter — but [based on Trump administration practices](#), Republicans may love racial purity-protecting the homeland more even than they love money.

Lorelei Laird is a freelance writer specializing in the law, and the only person you know who still has an “I Believe Anita Hill” hummer sticker. Find her at wordoffhelaird.com.