

Know Your Rights: CBP Home

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Disclaimer: This resource provides general information about the CBP Home application. It is not legal advice specific to your situation. We recommend that you exercise caution and speak to an immigration lawyer about your case.

What is Project Homecoming?

President Trump's [Project Homecoming](#) pressures immigrants to leave the country or “self-deport” using the *CBP Home* mobile application. The government is promoting *CBP Home* in their videos, press statements, and speeches, saying it is a safer way to leave the U.S.

At first, the government promised immigrants \$1,000 after they leave, plus help with the cost of airfare if they use the new *CBP Home* app. Starting January 2026, the government is offering [\\$2,600](#) after leaving.

Warning! Not all undocumented immigrants qualify to use this program. It is a good idea to talk to an immigration lawyer about the risks of using *CBP Home* for your situation.

Is it safe to use CBP Home app?

We do not exactly know. The government only gives general statements about what happens when an immigrant starts the *CBP Home* process. Since the program began, the government has shared different numbers for how many people have used *CBP Home* to leave the U.S. They have never shared the data behind the numbers.

CBP Home also requires immigrants to register under Trump's “alien registration” requirement. As part of the “alien registration” process, you will have to provide your fingerprints to the government at a U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) biometrics (fingerprint) appointment. This registration process is not without some risks ([you can read about that process here](#)).

For this reason, we do not have enough information to say for sure if it is safe to use *CBP Home*. We can say for sure that not everyone who is in the country without immigration status is eligible to use *CBP Home*.

Who can use CBP Home?

The government has a list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#). These say that any immigrant in the United States without a criminal record can use *CBP Home* to leave the country.

When the program began, the government said only two groups of people could use *CBP Home*:

- 1) If you do not have a criminal record **and** you were previously stopped or turned yourself into immigration authorities like Border Patrol (BP). -OR-
- 2) If you were given parole to enter the country or Temporary Protective Status (TPS).

The program also used to require that the information someone enters into the app [match](#) information already in the government's system. So, if you were never stopped by immigration officials or sent an application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), you were not eligible.

Can I return to the U.S. legally if I use *CBP Home*?

Probably not, or not for a long time. If you do not qualify to return to the U.S. when you leave, you will not be able to come back legally, even if you use *CBP Home*. The *CBP Home* app does not give you special protection or a right to return.

If you want to come back legally to the U.S., you will have to get a visa. You may be able to get a visa:

- if you have an eligible relative that lives in the U.S.,
- if a business sponsors your visa to work in the U.S, or
- by applying for a tourist visa or other temporary visa.

Even if you have an eligible relative or company willing to sponsor you, it still will be hard for you to get a visa. Using *CBP Home* means you admit that you lived in the U.S. without legal status, and this will make it hard to be approved to return. Remember also that certain criminal convictions, even low-level crimes, could be used by the U.S. government to deny you a visa.

Some immigrants might have the option to request to return to the U.S. through our refugee system. However, this is a very complicated and low chance process. Part of the reason is that the Trump administration does not want new refugees to come to the U.S. and is cutting off the funding to the refugee program.

What to expect if you leave the U.S., then want to return

If you were in the U.S. as an adult (over 18-years old) without lawful status for **6 months to 364 days**, you cannot get a new visa until you wait outside the U.S. for **3 years**.*

If were in the U.S. as an adult without status for **1 year or longer**, you cannot get a visa until you wait **10 years outside the U.S.***

* You may be able to return sooner, if you qualify for a waiver (or exception to these laws).

Returning to the U.S.: Special situation for immigrants currently in immigration court

If the immigration court gives you a deportation order and you leave after living in the U.S. for 1 year or longer, **then return to the U.S. without a visa**, you can **never** get a new visa. (In some cases, you may be able to ask for this punishment to be forgiven, but first you must stay outside the U.S. for **10 years**.)

If you leave the U.S. and miss an immigration court hearing without a good reason, you cannot get a visa to return until **5 years** after you leave the U.S. Using CBP Home may not be counted as a “good reason” for missing your hearing. In these cases, you may need to ask that your court case be closed **before** you leave.

If you do not show up for an immigration court hearing, the Immigration Judge can still give you a deportation order (this is called an “*in absentia*” order of removal). In this case, missing the hearing and getting the deportation order means an immigrant cannot return until 10-years have passed.

For more information in English and Spanish about the laws that may make it harder for someone to return to the U.S., please see this National Immigration Project [community explainer](#).

Will the CBP Home app help me buy an airplane ticket and get a passport (or other travel documents)?

It depends. If you qualify to use *CBP Home* to leave, you can ask the government to help you pay for a plane ticket. The government has done this for some people using commercial and charter flights. But if you do **not** already have a passport, the *CBP Home* process [may not help you](#) or the process may take a very long time to hear back from the government representatives. The government also is telling people to contact their country’s consulate for help leaving the U.S. This may be because there are some people who try to use *CBP Home* but are not successful in getting the necessary help.

Will they really send me the \$2,600 bonus after I leave?

It is a gamble. There are many reports of people [who have never received](#) the bonus. There are also examples of the money coming through. When you use *CBP Home*, you will have to let the government locate you using your cell phone. If you [leave by land](#), this is how the government makes sure you are outside the U.S. If you leave by plane or boat, CBP will confirm you have left. The government will send you a letter with the payment details after the government confirms you are outside of the U.S. We believe these payments are now all wire transfers. Some people have reported that wire transfers expired before they were able to try and collect the money. This has been a problem for people who are in detention when they agree to accept the bonus money.

If I am in detention, can I get the \$2,600 bonus if I leave?

The government is offering immigrants [in detention](#) the \$2,600 bonus if they agree to “voluntary departure,” instead of fighting their deportation cases. They call this policy “incentivized voluntary departure.”

The idea of asking an immigration judge to close your deportation case if you agree to leave [is not new](#). The government is using an old process (called voluntary departure) and offering [people in detention](#) the bonus, if they agree to give up fighting their deportation case. Some people have shared that officers have threatened them with permanent detention if they do not agree to accept the bonus. This is not true. You have the right to say no to the bonus if this is what you want, without being punished.

Immigrants who agree to voluntary departure do not get a deportation order on their record. This could make it easier for them to return to the U.S. in the future (but does not change any of the waiting times for being in the country without permission).

What if I have unpaid immigration fines?

If you use *CBP Home* to leave the country, the government says they will cancel any fines you received for not leaving the U.S. after a deportation order. But they may not cancel other fines, such as fines for not registering under the “[Alien Registration](#)” program. So, this benefit is only for people with deportation orders (or voluntary departure orders that they did not follow).

If I use the CBP Home app, can I be arrested before leaving the U.S.?

Yes. The government says that *CBP Home* users are a lower priority for arrest. But they do **not** promise that you won't be arrested.

If you use *CBP Home*, the government gives your information to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). ICE then reviews your information for any safety or security concerns. This means there is a risk of arrest before you leave the country, especially if you have [a criminal history](#). ICE also looks for people with arrest warrants, who overstayed a visa, have a deportation order, or whose immigration applications were denied.

In at least one community example, CBP stopped an immigrant at the airport before boarding their flight to their home country. The agent allowed them on the plane only after they showed proof that they had used *CBP Home*. This suggests that CBP may have considered arresting the passenger, even though they were already leaving, but stopped when they saw they had enrolled in *CBP Home*.

Can I leave the U.S. without using CBP Home?

You can still leave the U.S. without using *CBP Home*. There is no legal requirement to use *CBP Home* to leave the country. If you leave the country without using *CBP Home*, the government will still make a record that you have left with other systems.

In another community example, immigration agents stopped individuals who were trying to leave by land to Mexico. Agents checked if they had used the *CBP Home app*. They let people leave even though they had not used the *CBP Home app*. However, agents seem to have orders to arrest someone leaving without the *CBP Home app*, if they have any criminal record.

Conclusion

Under the Trump administration, immigrants and their loved ones are facing relentless pressure to leave the U.S. While *CBP Home* is presented as a safer alternative than leaving on their own, it is not available to everyone in the U.S. without immigration status. Community members should proceed with caution and are encouraged to speak with an immigration attorney about their individual situations.